THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A STUDY OF THE EDO "GAMES" OF MID-WESTERN NIGERIA

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled A STUDY OF THE EDO "GAMES" OF MID-WESTERN NIGERIA. submitted by Joseph G. Omoruan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to gather, describe and document the traditional games of children among four groups of Edo-speaking people in Mid-Western Nigeria. These were the Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo. A secondary purpose was to determine the extent to which the hypotheses generated from Allardt's game typology could be supported by the data gathered through the field research in Nigeria.

A review of some ethnographic surveys coupled with the personal knowledge and experience of the writer formed the basis for the cultural materials about the people. It was noted that the four groups were not only historically from the same origin (Benin), but that to a great extent they were also culturally homogeneous. An investigation into three social characteristics as having causal impact on game form within a given society as proposed by Allardt, revealed that among the people in question, there was a low division of labor, strong social and political constraints and a severe child obedience training. While these societies, as well as the children's games, are rapidly undergoing changes, on the whole, the conscience collective is predominant and the key institutions are the nuclear and extended family, the age grades, the religious rituals and the festivals.

Weak support was found for Allardt's first and fourth hypotheses. These stated that "the higher the division of labor,

the more formalized the rules of the games;" and "the lower the division of labor and the stronger the social constraints, the more popular are team sports, and also the higher the division of labor and the weaker the constraints, the more popular are team sports" respectively. The findings in the study did not support the second and third hypotheses. These conjectured that "the stronger the social and political constraints, the more important is physical skill and the less important technical skill;" and "the more severe the obedience training, the more aggressive are the activities" respectively. The strengths and weaknesses of Allardt's typology were briefly examined.

A majority of the seventy-five games were of a group nature rather than of an individual or team type. This category seems to exemplify the communal-type societies of the Edo-speaking people. A high incidence of games of physical strength was also found. In constrast, games involving technique were in the minority. The great number of non-aggressive games seems to indicate that aggression is both a psychobiological and "cultural" human trait. Generally, the simply structured game activities of easily comprehended rules and unrestricted team or group membership permitted maximum participation. Thus games serve as media of informal learning for the children.

Based on the findings, recommendations were made suggesting: similar studies of other cultural groups in Nigeria for comparative analysis; and that such studies would help preserve the fast dying indigenous games which could serve a wider use.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With rare exception, the peoples of most cultures which have existed have had, as a cultural element, games or organized play patterns which were unique to them. These activities were shaped or structured by many factors including the environment (both physical and social), history, interaction with adjacent peoples and seasons. The game structure has, to a great extent, failed to draw the sharp eye of ethnographers and anthropologists who have worked diligently to capture cultural data about numerous groups and as a consequence a window which gives a unique prespective relative to the socialization process of individuals and the social interaction among people is often lost for given sects, social units or cultural groups. Odum (1947) has also stated that societies can best be explained through a careful examination of race, sex, religion, ceremony, war, work, rural life, diet, play, etc. He concluded that "when we have ascertained the relationships between these elements and culture . . . we have gone a long way towards understanding any early society" (1947:130). Murdock (1965) has echoed this same idea.

A number of researchers[1] have provided valuable contributions

[1] They are Caillois (1957), Salter (1967), Jones (1967), Lansley (1969), Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962 and 1966), Roberts, Arth and Bush (1959), Allardt (1970), Roberts, Sutton-Smith and Kozelka (1963), Roberts, Sutton-Smith and Kendon (1963), Glassford (1970), Lüschen (1967), and Riesman (1954).

towards a structured and meaningful classification of games and as well have provided significant insight into the role of games[2] within the broad confines of a given socio-cultural system.

A social structure is composed of patterned social relations among individuals and groups, including the recurrent conduct in which these relations find expression (Blau, 1967:283). The continuity of the social structure like that of an organic structure is not destroyed by changes in the units. Social institutions, modes of behavior, norms, mores and folkways constitute the machinery by which a social structure, a network of social relations, maintains its existence and its continuity (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952:200). The division of labor can also help in social cohesion (Durkheim, 1964:62). This is true both in societies with low division of labor based mainly on sex and also very developed communities with high specialization. The kinship system, which is the core of the institutional complex in a society, assures every member of the society an integrated position in a network of cohesive social relations and socio-emotional support. Values and norms shared by members of a collectivity constitute external constraints with which each person must function or run the risk of censure. Similarly, these traditional values and their external institutional forms constitute a historic framework to which the social structure at any one time must adapt (Blau, 1967).

Games and play patterns are a significant part of the "complex

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[2]The concept of "Games" in the study groups is different from the modern Western one. In each group, there is a blanket term, for example, "Ikhiren" in Owan, that incorporates all forms of children's play activities.

whole" of society and may well serve as important indicators of social characteristics when societies are juxtaposed for purposes of examination and explanation. In a cross-cultural study of games by Roberts, Arth and Bush (1959), it was suggested that the expressive and model characteristics of games yielded specific kinds of relationships with the child rearing practices of a given culture. The conclusions drawn from this same study were that games of strategy appeared to be related to mastery of the social system, games of chance tended to be linked with mastery of the supernatural; and games of physical skill were possibly associated with the mastery both of self and environment. In another study by Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962) it was found that variations in the distribution of games relate to the variation in the child training.

Play theories propounded by Groos (1911), Hall (1904), Piaget (1951), Huizinga (1955), to mention a few, have also given us insight into other functions of play and games.

Based on his work on solidarity and cohesion and coupled with theoretical concepts postulated by Durkheim (1964), Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Parsons (1966), as well as the work of Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962), Allardt (1966), a Finnish sociologist, devised the four following propositions which led to the typology or classification of games set out in Figure 1. It was Allardt's contention that the greater the division of labor the more formalized would be the rules which govern the playing of games. Such formalization occurs where inter-group relationships are carefully specified in order to avoid role conflicts.

The second proposition was that the stronger the social and

LOW ——— DIVISION OF LABOR ——— HIGH

OBEDIENCE TRAINING	SEVERE	NON-SEVERE	SEVERE	NON-SEVERE
STRONG	Non-formalized Physical Strength Aggressive Team	Non-formalized Physical Strength Aggressive Team	Formalized Physical Strength Aggressive Individual	Formalized Physical Strength Non-aggressive Individual
	Village Fights	Tug-of-war	Boxing, Wrestling	Track & Field
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS	Non-formalized Technical Skill Aggressive Individual	Non-formalized Technical Skill Non-aggressive Individual	Formalized Technical Skill Aggressive Team	Formalized Technical Skill Non-aggressive Team
	Hunting and training for Hunting	Hardly any sports or games	American Football Rugby	Baseball Soccer
WEAK				

FIGURE I

ALLARDT'S TYPOLOGY FOR THE EXAMINATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

and political constraints, the more important would be strength and physical skills and the less important would be technical skills and skills of strategy in the playing of games. To an extent this proposition is tied directly to the conflict-enculturation hypothesis of Roberts and Sutton-Smith who noted that conflicts, which result from social learning in childhood and adolescence

> . . . lead to involvement in expressive models, such as games, through which these conflicts are assuaged and as a result of which a process of buffered learning occurs which has enculturative value for the competencies required in culture (Sutton-Smith, Roberts and Kozelka, 1963:15).

These researchers found evidence to indicate that where social constraints were severe or where there was a high level of conflict relative to self-reliant behavior, games of physical skill and tests of strength tended to be more prevalent.

It was further proposed by Allardt that the more severe was the child obedience training, the more the games of that society would be typified by aggressive behavior patterns. It has been suggested that the lack of achievement, and that repressive and authoritarian discipline at home, school, etc. give rise to aggressive tendencies. Sometimes aggression is said to be developmental. "The expression of any form of aggression which is not dangerous to the society should have cathartic effect and can be permitted." (Dollard, John, Miller and Doob, 1939:183).

The fourth proposition was that the greater the solidarity and cohesiveness in a society, the more popular would be team sports. Solidarity and cohesiveness within societies which have a high division

of labor are obtained when there are weak social constraints. In such societies as these, what really counts is the outcome of the exchange of the many dissimilar activities and goods. Some tolerance towards dissimilarity in such a situation has to be developed.

The typology and the propositions generated by Allardt's theoretical work have not been examined through field research and as a consequence the value of the theory has not been determined. Assuming the acceptance of the underlying theoretical premises, it is still necessary to operationalize many of the variables used by Allardt in constructing the typology and the propositions before the model can be tested.

The variable labelled "division of labor" which is integral to two of the propositions requires considerably more elaboration than is given by Allardt who states the the "division of labor is defined in terms of the number of items for exchange: the higher the number of items for exchange, the greater the division of labor" (1966:171). While this variable could conceivably be measured by determining the number of items within the study group which are available for exchange, the task would be onerous in the extreme, if not impossible. To put the concept of division of labor into another context, it can be viewed as the development of a division of tasks (whether among individuals or among institutions) which result within a group or society as a consequence of their struggle to survive. In its simplest form labor was divided among people on the basis of sex. Over time a specialization of labor roles evolved and,

in general, the greater the degree of task differentiation the greater the complexity of the system. It seems essential to view this variable as being on a continuum with very few, if any, societies currently existent whose division of labor is based simply on the division of tasks between the sexes. On the other extreme, there are emerging a greater number of groups with a complex or highly differentiated division of labor. In the latter environment role differentiation continues to develop seemingly in an exponential manner.

For the purposes of analysis within this study, an attempt is made to determine merely whether the division of labor within the villages of the Edo-speaking groups more closely fit the low side of the continuum or the higher side. It is considered that a society with a low division of labor occurs where a given individual within a group performs similar tasks (a "likeness" of roles) to his mates; where mutual aid and helpfulness is a norm. Conversely, the higher side of the continuum is considered to be typified by a complex set of labor roles. In the latter case a complicated structure of tasks is the norm wherein the production of even simple goods relies upon an intricate interweaving of differentiated roles.

Some degree of subjectivity is an obvious limitation in any attempt to determine the place that a social group should occupy along this loosely defined continuum bounded by two polar types.

At the present, no other means of operationalizing Allardt's

"high" and "low" division of labor exists or is readily identifiable.

Two other independent variables identified by Allardt and which he linked with games of physical strength and technical skill were the constraints to which a group of people were subjected of a social and political nature. The concept of constraint embodies the ideas of control, compulsion and regulation either self-imposed or externally imposed.

The need for "social control or constraint" reflects the need for standardized response patterns within a group to violations of the group's norms in order to protect the integrity of the system. The most inconspicuous form of social constraint is self-control exerted by individual members as a consequence of their ability to imagine the negative reactions of other members or because of their conscientious censorship. More conspicuous forms of social constraint are such social mechanisms as class or age group structures each with their own regulative norms, or hierarchical structure. Deviation from or violation of these norms results in the application of negative sanctions against the non-conformist by other members of the group. In some societies these sanctions are rigidly applied and such groups are said to have strong social constraints whereas in other societies, violations of norms may result in an ambivalent response by group members and hence social constraints are said to be weak.

Political institutions are specialized units that affect the social structure as a whole. They contain rather formal

provisions for allocating the power resources and facilities of a society among the various subgroups which comprise the "whole." Obviously the various subgroups within the given society are concerned with the manner in which such resources are distributed. Decisions made by those in control of the state must necessarily bear unequally on groups and individuals. As a consequence, there must be some mechanisms which lead individuals to accept the propriety of the decision-making process -- mechanisms which will make them obey or carry out decisions which they do not like. Conversely and since disagreement about the policies established by the members of the political group in control frequently occur, polities must formulate mechanisms through which concerned groups can maximize their ability to bring pressure on the decision-making structure.

The degree of control or constraining of members of a society by the political structure varies from society to society. In some cases the controls are rigid and violation of decisions made or opposition to policies structured can, and often do, result in the levying of severe negative sanctions. Legitimacy in these cases is frequently, but not always, achieved through tradition. Allardt stated that "Social and political constraints are assumed to be particularly strong in a) small tribal societies, b) societies with rigid class structure, and c) modern political dictatorships" (1970:27). Conversely, other political institutions are characterized by weaker controls or constraints. Notable among these is the democratic system which involves the highest degree

of access to the decision-making structure by various groups and individuals in the polity.

The question of how to determine the place that a social group occupies along the continuum of strong to weak social and political constraints is difficult in the extreme. In the first instance, one is hard pressed to justify the pooling of the two separate concepts: social constraints and political constraints. Societies which are typified by strong social control mechanisms are not necessarily those which are also typified as having strong political controls as an integral part of their polity. As an example, Benin approaches being a centralized state with rather strong political and social constraints whereas Owan nears a condition of diffused and decentralized government, and therefore rather weak political constraints, yet their social controls are well established and strong.

The second major difficulty is one that Allardt, himself, recognized (1970:27). Operationally defining the independent variables is difficult. What, precisely, are strong political constraints and what are strong social constraints? For purposes of this study strong political constraints are viewed as occurring where legitimacy of political action is gained through tradition, where severe penalties are levied against those members of society who attack or violate the polity. Strong social constraints occur where a society is typified by a rigid class structure (a hereditary caste system), strong taboos, traditional customs and rites.

As is the case with the "division of labor" variable it is difficult to determine with any precision the degree of strength in the social and political constraints. Generalizations of the broadest types must suffice.

The final independent variable set out by Allardt is that which relates to the degree of severity of child training practices. The child at birth is largely helpless; he is dependent upon adults for his survival and for training. Moreover, the process by which adults train him is not left to their unguided ingenuity. On the contrary, ways of training children are part of the culture of every society, and the task is performed by definite individuals. The family, in particular, is organized to carry out this task. Without entering into a lengthy discussion on the process of socialization and the systems of reward and punishment, suffice it to say that those responsible for the rearing of the children use this technique in varying degrees. Among the Commanche Indians of the western United States and the Eskimo of the circumpolar region, child-rearing practices were non-severe; there was a high dependence upon reward and an avoidance of punishment. No doubt the avoidance of punishment in the socialization process of the child was functional among these groups for the condition of life was so exacting that the ability to act autonomously, swiftly, and courageously was a virtual necessity for survival.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons for not avoiding the use of punishment altogether. Some acts are dangerous, and it is

not always possible to provide an environement in which the child will not be able to hurt himself. Hence the use of controlled punishment can be used to develop an avoidance response. Further, it is desirable to make a child sensitive to disapproval early, so that in later life he can be guided in his responses by hints of disapproval from others.

The question of operationalizing the variable of the degree of severity of child-rearing practices must necessarily focus upon the system of reward and punishment within a society relative to bowel-training, feeding practices, respect for adults and others, and response to societal taboos. Where corporal punishment is frequently applied to children who deviate from the expected responses the child-rearing practices are viewed as severe. On the contrary, in those societies where such behaviors are not punished and where positive acts only are rewarded, the child-rearing practices are considered as non-severe. There is hardly any society where some elements of both systems of child-rearing practices do not operate. It is also true that practices that may be considered severe by members of one society may not be so viewed by others. But for the purpose of this study, the frequent corporal punishments and reprimands related to bowel-training, feeding, respect for elders etc. which are prevalent in these four cultural groups will be considered as severe child-rearing practices.

Below are stated without any amendments the four hypotheses postulated by Allardt for further investigation/consideration..

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses by Allardt were based on the above variables.

(1) The higher the division of labor, the more formalized the rules of the physical activities or games of a given cultural group.

(2) The stronger the social and political constraints, the more important is physical strength and the less important technical skill in the game structure.

(3) The more severe the obedience training, the more aggressive are the activities.

(4) The lower the division of labor and the stronger the social constraints, the more popular are team sports, and also the higher the division of labor and the weaker the constraints, the more popular are team sports.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to collect, describe and analyze the organizational patterns of the games of children among four groups of Edo-speaking people in Mid-Western Nigeria. The traditional games of these people are rapidly disappearing as a significant part of their daily regimen.

As this is the first time that these games are to be recorded, it is of vital importance that the description be set

down in great detail. It is also important to obtain photographs and sketches to accompany these descriptions wherever possible.

The second purpose is to attempt to determine the extent to which Allardt's hypotheses can be supported in an investigation of the traditional games of children among the four groups. These four groups are Benin (which includes Asaba), Ishan, Owan and Urhobo, and are selected because they may contrast culturally with one another in a significant manner. In point of fact they are quite similar in many aspects. Allardt's hypotheses may be seen as implying a causal relationship between games and social factors. It is important to make it clear that in the present study no suggestion of a causal relationship is intended. These factors such as the division of labor, social and political constraints and child rearing practices are significant but others not considered by Allardt could also be as important or more important. An attempt is made to assess the question of whether or not a simple relationship exists among these factors suggested by Allardt and the game preferences of the people. The intent is to understand better the overall culture of the Edo-speaking peoples.

JUSTIFICATION

In Africa, as a whole, and in Nigeria in particular, physical education as a formal academic discipline is relatively young. Evidence of this can be seen in the dearth of literature and research studies on this subject in Africa. If physical

education is to project into the future, a study based on the intelligent interpretation of the traditional games is considered a worthwhile endeavour.

The physical education curriculum in Nigeria and sporting activities in all educational institutions, reflect little or none of the cultural heritage of the forefathers. It is believed that findings in this study can be used to improve this situation and also complement lectures in physical education in institutions of higher learning which tend to be biased toward a western cultural ethic.

If sport and games are highly symptomatic in the sense that they are culture-prone behaviors, sociological studies of games in culture can be of great interest to those involved in sport as well as those not interested in sport and athletics per se. It is true that the kind of information required for an analysis of games in culture determines the method of approach of the researcher. In order to determine the structure of the system of games themselves and their interrelationships with the socio-cultural system at large and its sub-systems, such studies as the one proposed are essential starting points. It is impossible to overlook the fact that sport and games in one culture may have different meanings or functions in another (Gini, 1939:283-299).

There has been a limited number of studies conducted in the field of physical education which focus upon the play and game patterns of non-literate peoples. Studies such as those of Stumpf

and Cozens (1947), Dunlap (1951), Salter (1967), Jones (1967), Lansley (1969) and Glassford (1970) are just a few. Sadly enough, there is none on Africa. This study is considered to be a contribution toward the maintenance of Africa's heritage of sport.

DELIMITATIONS

The following delimitations apply to this study:

A. The geographical location is the cultural area as classified in the Human Relations Area Files as the Edo-speaking peoples. The selected cultural areas are Benin (this includes Asaba), Ishan, Owan, and Urhobob (see Appendix A).

B. Although cultural dance, music, songs, drama, legend and many physical pastimes are very important in the lives of the people, each is a separate study. They will only be discussed briefly.

C. This study is on children's traditional games.

D. Since the intrusion of the Europeans and other peoples from the Western World into the area under consideration, some aspects of the tribal cultures have, in varying degrees, been subjected to acculturation and have undergone a process of deculturation. The difficulty of determining indigenous patterns of behavior, beliefs, etc. is apparent. Where the origin of a game is unknown, or undetermined, it is noted.

LIMITATIONS

The following are some of the factors that limit the study:

A. Very little, if any, writing has been done on the topic of traditional games of the people. There were, therefore, very limited ethnographical reports available for data verification.

B. Although the common language is the "pigeon English," this was not spoken by the majority of the illiterate individuals. The researcher spoke a few out of the many tribal languages. Assistance of interpreters was needed on a few occasions to improve communication.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Society. An organized aggregate of human beings living as an entity and sharing a self-sufficient system of action which is capable of existing longer than the life-span of an individual.

Socialization. The process whereby a person acquires sensitivity to social stimuli and learns to get along with, and behave like others in his group or culture.

Culture. That complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1871:1).

Culture area. A geographical region, occupied by a number of peoples, in which a characteristic culture pattern is recognizable through the repeated association of specific traits, and through a mode or modes of subsistence related to the particular environment (Ehrich and Henderson, 1968:563).

Rural area. A geographical location inhabited by people

living a predominantly traditional life style. The major focus of the economic system is upon agriculture, hunting or gathering.

Linguistic family. A number of individual languages grouped together according to a genetic relationship.

Religion. A unified system of beliefs and practices that formalises the conception of the relation between man and his environment. Religion embodies the idea of supernatural agencies existing beyond the observable universe, that are believed to influence, direct or control the course of nature and human life.

Ritual. The established form for a ceremony or any formal and customarily repeated act or series of acts.

Division of labor. Allocation of tasks customarily endorsed in a given society. The greater the degree of task differentiation, the greater the complexity of the system and the number of items for exchange; hence the higher the division of labor.

Obedience training. The dependence of child training practices upon the maintenance systems of a society. It is the initial indulgence or non-indulgence and subsequent severe or non-severe socialization process of the child. Such factors as mode of expression, toilet training, dependence, sexual and/or aggressive behaviors are of great importance.

Social constraints. Existing social norms which are specific and related to strong sanctions and are applied with great consistency.

Political constraints. Mechanisms formulated by the polities (government body) which lead individuals to obey or carry out the established policies whether or not they like them.

Aggression. A form of psychobiologic energy either innate or arising in response to or intensified by frustration, which may be manifested by (1) overt destruction, fight, infliction of pain, etc., (2) covert hostile attitudes. (Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language.) It is also culture-prone.

Play. A voluntary and distinct activity carried out within arbitrary boundaries in space and time, separate from daily roles, concerns, and influences and have no seriousness, purpose, meaning or goals for the actor beyond those emerging within the boundaries and context of the play act itself (Edwards, 1973:49).

Physical activities. Activities which involve gross human movement and/or include, as a major component, the execution of physical skill. A competitive element may or may not be present.

Game. An exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrial outcome (Avadon and Sutton-Smith, 1971:7). In some cultures such as those under study there is a blanket term, such as "Ikhiren" in Owan, that incorporates all children play activities.

Games with formalized rules. Games that are formally structured and organized within the context of time, score and

space constraints, with specified number of players, and explicit rules of behavior which demand sanctions when violated.

Games with non-formalized rules. Games that are structured and organized with no fixed time, score, space and number of players; in which the rules may or may not be changed without rigid sanctions.

Team game. Any game in which two or more players compete against two or more opposing players so that the outcome of the game will depend on joint or collective efforts of the players, and in which there is more than a single winner.

Group games. Any game in which one or more players compete against opposing players so that the outcome of the game will depend on individual efforts of the players.

Individual game. Any game in which one person competes against another, a group or against established norms or objectives contained within the structure of the game or against nature. In such a game there is only one winner or loser.

Games of chance. Activities in which the outcome is determined by guesses and/or uncontrolled artifacts (Roberts and Sutton-Smith, 1962:166-185).

Games of strategy. Activities in which the outcome is determined by a rational choice of the possible courses of action.

Games of physical strength. Game activities in which the innate physical strength of the participant is tested. Skill is of secondary importance.

Games of technical skill. Game activities in which the outcome resides heavily on the technique, fine motor control, manual dexterity and knowledge of the game.

CHAPTER II

THE FIELD WORK EXPERIENCE

It has been said that "field research is a challenging scientific undertaking, an adventure of both the mind and the spirit. It is also a memorable human experience . . ." (Casagrande, 1960:xii). The problems of being the "first" makes this experience an important and rewarding one.

METHODOLOGY

A five-month period was intially planned for the field work, however, six months were spent collecting data. The period October to March was chosen, firstly, because it was the dry season which made travelling from place to place easier, and secondly, it was a period of harvesting for the farmers - a time of festivities. Preparatory to the field work, a few preliminary decisions had to be made. The first was to select the ethnic groups to be studied. These were restricted to the Benin (which includes the Asaba), Ishan, Owan and Urhobo in the cultural area classified as "Edo" in the Human Relations Area Files (Murdock, 1972:48). See map in Appendix A. In Bradbury's (1957) ethnographic survey of West Africa, the Benin kingdom and the Edo speaking peoples were classified into four main ethnic groups. The four ethnic groups selected represent this classification. The second decision was to prepare a budget for the entire field work. This was done and sent along with

a copy of a letter explaining the purpose of the study to the Mid-West State Government. Circular letters on the project were also sent to both the State Ministries of Information, the Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, and the Principals of the nine Teacher Training Colleges in the State (see Appendix C). The travel to Nigeria was arranged for September 9, 1974.

Although the researcher was born and raised at Ora in Owan Division, and had taught in several schools and colleges in the State, it was necessary to pay short reconnaissance visits upon arrival to Nigeria to some parts of Urhobo, Ishan and Benin which were unfamiliar.

Journeys within the research area were made mainly by public transport. On few occasions the researcher had free rides from friends and also in school vans. Contacts with the people were made through the schools and colleges. Courtesy visits were paid to some village heads and to council offices in company of some members of staff and/or the heads of schools.

Preparatory to the organization of the study, an examination of available literature was carried out to amass descriptions of the games of the target area. This survey proved almost fruitless. The only available material uncovered on the games of the Edo speaking peoples was a small booklet entitled Benin Games and Sports (1951) written by the noted Benin historian and former curator of the Benin Museum (the Obakhavbaye of Benin), Chief Jacob U. Egharevba.

Data as to the types of games which were preferred were

noted and, in addition, information as to where or from whom the games had been learned, when and why it was played. This was a difficult task and the material gathered is incomplete. When examining game patterns, it is easy to overlook the fact that a person's attitude to a given game, and, for that matter, his way of playing it, is in a state of flux during the childhood years due to the process of maturation. For this reason special attention was given to noting the age of players of different games. Similarly, the sex role was carefully scrutinized.

An often revealing dimension of games is the persistence of certain rituals or habitual practices which apparently have no central significance. For example, many of the games of the Edo-speaking groups studied contain within them the convention that the player who performs poorest during the game be meted out some form of punishment. This is in opposition to the convention that the player who performs best be rewarded. The latter technique appears to span cultures and centuries and it is difficult to assess the underlying rationale as to why so many of the games dealt with in this study contain a provision for the punishment of the losers. Similarly, the ritual of confirmation that a player has been caught by a power "It" prevails in many cultures. As a consequence, these features and others were carefully noted for future reference or discussion.

Due to the fact that four separate groups formed the basis of the study, it was necessary to note and document variations of the games both within an area and among the areas. The level of formality or rule structure was examined as well as the level of popularity when this could be determined.

As most of the games were played behind houses, in the streets and other restricted areas, it was not possible to give actual dimensions

of these facilities. There were group, team, but hardly any individual games. A majority of the games were of physical strength and a few others were of skill, endurance and chance.

It was also desirable to collect data on the variables set out in the hypotheses to be tested: the division of labor, the child rearing practices and the strength of social constraints. The dependent variable was the relative popularity of the traditional games. The games collected were catalogued, and some pictures accompany the descriptions. For a most practicable approach, the research was guided by the four principles for field work (Edgerton and Langness, 1974:3).

(1) That man is uniquely suited to understand his fellow man and the meaning of life in any other culture. The "participant - observer" is one of the best ways to do this.

Apart from the researcher's past childhood experience, he also took part in some of the games studied.

(2) That culture must be seen through the eyes of those who live it in addition to the eyes of the scientific observer. One of the greatest of the anthropological field workers, Bronislaw Malinowski, helped to set the task: ". . . to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (1922:25).

(3) There must be involvement to understand as well as intellectual detachment to analyse the insider's views.

(4) The principle of holism dictates that culture must be seen as a whole. Cultural behavior must not be isolated from the

context in which they occur or to those they are related.

Various methods were used for the various aspects of the study.

Literary sources. In addition to Chief Egharevba's booklet, Benin Games and Sports which had been mentioned earlier, a few other writers only made references to some traditional games without giving details of these games. No record of these were kept.

On child rearing practices, the study by Uka (1966) of the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan on "Child Development" by trained informants was used for verification. During the work in the field, the researcher had access to Health Education students in a postgraduate class. These students were requested to write short papers on the child rearing practices in their localities. These materials were also used to verify the findings of this study.

Participant - Observation. As the researcher travelled through the villages and towns, children and adults were seen playing games, dancing and participating in burial ceremonies and other festivals. It should be noted that in these aspects of the people's way of life, formal invitations are not needed in order that one joins the group. A casual visitor is welcomed and this became a method of gaining access to informants.

In most of the villages and towns, children were at school during the day and were only at home to play most of the evenings and during moonlit nights. Most of these towns and villages have no electric lights, and with the bushes and forests around them, they

are so dark that only the bright moonlit nights offer opportunities for children's games to be pursued after sunset.

In the schools, the physical education programs consisted mainly of calisthenics and foreign games such as Soccer, Volleyball, Rounders, etc. During recess periods or when the children are on their own, many of them could be seen engaged in some form of traditional games such as they play at home in the evenings and during moonlit evenings. In some schools, the researcher made special requests for children to demonstrate some of their traditional games.

Traditional festivals are celebrated at different times within the year throughout various parts of the State. So, also, are dances. These festivals mark harvest seasons, appeals to gods for the purification of the village and towns, commemoration of ancient expeditions and reminiscences of tribal wars, or tribute to heroes and heroines. Some festivals feature processional dancing in organized groups and masquerade parades. In Benin City, for example, the "Igue" festival is most significant, in Urhonigbe the "Olokun", in Warri the "Awankere", in Ishan the "Igbabonelimin", in Owan the "Oduhomon" festivals. A few of these are described elsewhere in this study. As many of these festivals are seasonal, the researcher could see only a few during the field work. Apart from the religious significance of the festivals, they also provide for community living which is reflected in the abundance of group and team games.

Visits were made to markets to observe various items of exchange. These provided the opportunities for systematic observation

of the way of life of the people and to examine the place of play and games within the cultural pattern.

Interviews. It had been noted that in almost all of the places visited, contact with the people of the village or town was either through the schools or the Teachers' Colleges. The following were the main reasons for this method of approach. First, a school or college is held in high esteem in every village or town, due to the fact that people care a great deal about the education of their children. The priorities of social amenities of any village or town are the schools, the Health Centres, pipe-borne water and light, in that order. As a consequence, whatever project or enquiry that the people view as having some benefits for their children is very acceptable. In this way the researcher was never mistaken for a political agent or for a tax assessment official. The second reason was that the researcher's professional experience and position in the State made him easily acceptable in any educational institution. Many of the teachers were ex-pupils or ex-colleagues.

The interviews were conducted personally and those with the key informants were very informal. There were no structured questionnaires used. Sets of topics were introduced during conversations and the informants talked freely. Short notes of important points were noted and these were developed later. Another method used was to ask about a topic either pertinent to the social organization or to the child rearing practices in many different ways until it was certain that one was not misunderstood. Sometimes a general question

was asked and the informant was left to talk freely. Examples of such questions were:

(1) Why are market days observed as resting days for farmers?

(2) What do men do on market days when women go to the market?

(3) Apart from Wrestling matches, what other games or sports were staged on an inter-quarter or village basis?

(4) Which childrens' game was most popular when you were young?

(5) Woman, what do you do when your child is beaten by your mate's child? ((A polygamous family).

It was beyond the scope of this study to attempt to interprete the many rites and taboos that were connected with the child rearing practices. Attention was then focused on the relationships of the child with other members of the family. Some experienced women students in the Teachers' Colleges helped to interview some mothers on the above. In such polygamous societies as those which were being studied, the inherent rivalry among mothers and siblings was considered pertinent in the study. Some children were also interviewed on the spot to talk about the games they play. Other people interviewed included Chiefs and some elders in towns and villages, heads of schools, men and women holding special positions in the local community. Examples of such people were craftsmen and women, priests, specialists who perform circumcisions etc., and faculty members of the Department of African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos.

Among some of the many problems encountered was the difficulty

of gaining information as to the origin of the games, and the fact that people were always more interested in talking about rituals and taboos, which vary from one group to another, than about games. As was mentioned earlier, it was not within the scope of this study to attempt to interpret these aspects of the peoples way of life. If special words had to be used for meaningful explanations, the researcher had, on some occasions, the assistance of interpreters. On the whole, the interviews revealed many areas for further studies in the traditional games and life patterns of the peoples of Mid-Western Nigeria. No attempt was made to quantify the responses for statistical analysis.

Questionnaires. In order to reach a large number of persons and also to be able to gather more games, a questionnaire was designed (Appendix B). Those who administered it were some primary school teachers and students in the Teacher Training Colleges. All the Teacher Training Colleges and some High Schools in the State have boarding facilities. There are competitive entrance examinations and students are drawn from all parts of the State for these institutions. Each college or school conducts its own entrance examination which is open to candidates within and outside the State. A very small percentage of candidates from outside the State is accepted. The colleges and schools are State owned and are open to all citizens of the State. This situation made the information about games from the students in the Teachers Colleges most rewarding as it permitted verification. It was possible to receive information about some games from students in different colleges in the State who were of the same ethnic group.

Each student was requested to describe a traditional children's game in his or her place of origin. Another advantage was that most of these students had taught in village schools where they had observed some of these games before gaining admission into these colleges.

It was the pattern that in every Teachers College or school, the researcher would give a talk on the research project, explain details in the questionnaire, entertain questions before giving out the questionnaire to the informants. A subsequent visit was arranged for the collection of the forms, and, in some cases, for some practical demonstrations of a few games. The problems associated with this method were, first, that not all the students and teachers returned the questionnaire, although seventy percent did. However, this was to be expected. Many of the informants had difficulty in expressing themselves while describing the games. In this respect, the best results were from the two higher institutions: College of Education (Physical Education Department), Abraka, and the College of Physical Education, Afuze. It was obvious that the ideal method was to see every game played. But because of pressure of time this was not possible. First, there were other aspects of the study that needed attention. Second, the games and play-forms were so numerous that it was not possible to see every one played within the period of the research.

Radio Talks. It was not found necessary to present the project to the people through the Information media (radio, television and the Press), but a brief mention of the study was sandwiched into three cultural television programs in the State. On the national

network of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, there were six series of talks on "Edo Culture" during the research period by Mr. Evinma Ogie of the Department of African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos.

Role Playing. This was found to be an interesting way of studying the people's way of life. The researcher took an active part in a burial ceremony of a dead Chief; was a special guest in a native marriage in Efurun near Warri where he had to break the traditional kola[1] nuts; and led a delegation of young men and women from Lagos to Ora in the Mid-West State for a community development project - the building of a town hall. Some Primary School children on one playgound at Benin requested the researcher to umpire a Volley-ball match. The researcher also took part in many of the children's games.

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[1]This is a very important symbolic fruit used in many aspects of the social and ritual life of the people. It is grown locally.

CHAPTER III

OVERVIEW OF THE MID-WESTERN NIGERIA

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Mid-West State, as it is today, is a part of the old Benin Empire. The various ethnic communities of Owan, Etsako, Ishan, Akoko-Edo, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Isoko, Asaba, Ika, Aboh, and Ijaw all migrated from Benin, and had a common origin there even though several now speak different languages and dialects. Both Talbot and Murdock have, however, classified them into four linguistic stocks, namely, Edo, Yoruba, Ijaw, and the Ibo, all of whom have been traced back to one of the five clusters of the Kwa sub-family (Talbot, 1926:28; Murdock, 1945:242-244).

The Benin Kingdom existed from about the ninth until the late eighteenth century. The progenitors of the Benin people were said to have moved from Egypt southwards through the Sudan in search of fertile land, until they settled in an area which they called "Igodomigodo" (Egharevba, 1968:1). The Empire of the first period or dynasty was founded about 900 A.D. and the rulers or kings were commonly known as "Ogiso." The Benin Empire emerged as a civilizing force in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during the reigns of the great warrior-kings such as Ewuare (1440 - 1472), Ozolua (1481 - 1503), Esigie (1504 - 1549), Orogbua (1550 - 1578) and Eghengbuda (1578 -

1606), and under their leadership attained the greatest expansion during those periods (Egharevba, 1968:13-33). Its influence extended as far west as present Ghana and beyond the river Niger to the east. The rise and expansion of the Empire were marked by external trade with neighboring States.

By the early 1500's the splendour of Benin attracted both missionaries and merchants to its cities and settlements. A precursor event occurred in 1493 which had wide spread implications for many parts of the world. On that date a Papal Bull divided the undeveloped parts of the earth between Spain and Portugal for the purpose of propagating Christianity. A substantial part of Africa was allotted to Portugal including the Benin Empire. The first European, Rey de Sequeira visited Benin in 1472 and was followed by Portuguese merchants and other missionaries by 1485 (Roth, 1968:4).

The recession and fall of the Benin Empire began when European rivalries for the monopoly of slave trade on the West Coast of Africa became reckless and bitter. Much as this profitable but cruel business improved the economy and social life of some of the people, it also generated internal ambitions and strife. The decay which was to lead to the eventual disintegration of the Empire had begun. In 1897 the final blow to the Empire was struck when the British landed a punitive force against it following the historic massacre of seven Englishmen. These men had been warned that strangers were not allowed to witness the "Igue" festival (anniversary of the death of past "Oba" (kings), but they had chosen to ignore the warning and paid the consequences.

It was traditional that during this annual ceremony, the "Oba" (king) must not be seen by strangers (Egharevba, 1968:49).

The upshot of the British attack was of great significance for the people of Benin. In 1898 the reigning king was captured and deported to Calabar. As the "Oba" was leaving the city he lamented:

> I appeal to the Almighty and the Spirits of the departed "Obas" of Benin, my fathers, to judge between me and the Binis who ill advised and cunningly sold me into the hands of the British troops in search of their own liberty and benefit. Oh! Benin, Merciless and Wicked! Farewell, Farewell (Egharevba, 1968:59).

He died in exile in 1914 and Eweka II, who succeeded his father was forced to submit to British rule. In Nigeria, a colonial governmental mechanism had remained intact until October 1, 1960 when Nigeria attained independence.

Before the Mid-West was established at a State in 1963, Nigeria had been divided into three separate Regions, the North, East, and West, in addition to the Federal Territory of Lagos. Their boundaries were fixed in a rather fortuitous manner.[1] An appreciable degree of political homogeneity had grown within each of them over the years. Unfortunately, however, each Region had a pre-eminent tribe, which inevitably dominated the political and cultural affairs to the discontent of the minority groups. The minority sentiments and the lack of economic development in these areas gave rise to dissatisfaction which expressed itself in the demand for new States. In the Mid-West area, organized

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[1] The river Niger and its main tributary, river Benue, formed the natural boundaries for the three Regions of Nigeria.

political movements to this end were most active.

Political agitation for a re-designation of States was first activated by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (former President of the Republic of Nigeria). Azikiwe set the stage for much changes in a speech given in 1948, when, in opposition to the Richard's Constitution (which invested greater powers in the Regions), he advocated a Federation comprising eight Regions (one of which was a Benin-Delta Region) and a strong central government. Following this declaration by Azikiwe, the Benin Community was organized to join in a concerted effort which would bring about the creation of a Benin-Delta State. The name soon changed from "Benin Community" to "Benin-Delta People's Party" to make it more embracing (Sada, 1965:3).

During this period, the Oba (king) of Benin, nevertheless, retained the leadership of the party while Benin continued to serve as the focus of activities of the organization. But when, by 1956, the Oba of Benin was appointed a Minister in the Western Region Legislature, both the leadership and the name of the party changed. Chief D.C. Osadebay, who later became the Premier of the new region, became the leader and the reconstituted party was re-named the "Mid-West State Movement." This change of name became necessary, first, because there existed a political party, the "National Council of Nigerian Citizens"[2]

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[2]There were three main political parties in Nigeria:

(1) The National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC which controls the Eastern Regional Government and is also a partner in the Federal Government coalition which later was in power in the Mid-West.

(2) The Northern People's Congress (NPC) controls the north Regional Government and the senior partner in the Federal coalition government.

(3) The Action Group (AG) until its crisis in 1962, was in control of Western Regional Government. But in 1962, some of its members broke away and formed the Nigeria National Democratic Party then in power in the Western Region.

(NCNC), the opposition party in the Western Region Legislature under the same leadership. The majority of Mid-Westerners belong to this party. Second, the organization was to cater for more than political matters.

As a result of the Macpherson's Constitution in 1951, there evolved for the first time a Nigerian controlled government in Western Nigeria under the Action Group Party, a party closely associated with the Yoruba ethnic group in the West and considered supercillious and discriminatory to the Mid-Westerners who were all non-Yorubas (Sada, 1965:3). This close association of the government with the Yoruba group led to increased distrust of the regional government by the Mid-Western leaders and accentuated their desire for political separation. There were notable changes in the Movement characterised by a series of conferences and positive actions demanding the creation of the new State.

Meanwhile, the regional government was beginning to feel the political threat of the Movement, and much more so as the opposition party had been exploiting the State issue to undermine the government party in the area of the proposed State (Sada, 1965:4). Apparently, to forestall the opposition party, the government party made a motion in the Western House of Assembly in 1952 requesting Her Majesty's government to make constitutional arrangement for the creation of a Mid-West State. However, when the Western Region became self-governing in 1957, instead of contemplating the creation of the new State, a Mid-West Council was set up, supposedly to take care of the minority problems of the Mid-West area. The Willink Commission of 1958, which

was appointed by the Federal Government to enquire into the fears of minorities, rejected the demand for the creation of more States. They argued that

> The powers left to the regions by the decision of 1953 are considerable and as we have said elsewhere, we do not regard it as realistic to suppose that any of the regions will forego the powers they now have . . . . A new state created today would have to compete with the existing regions and the cost in overheads, not only in financial but in resources . . . particularly in the trained minds would be high.
>
> With the approach of independence . . . there has been a sharp recrudescence of tribal feelings . . . . It would be a pity if, at the moment when Nigeria achieved independence, separate states had been created which enshrined tribal separation in a political framework (Willink, 1958:88).

Thus the creation of the State appears to have been undertaken in apparent disregard of the recommendations of the Commission.

The 1959 Federal election brought to power a coalition government comprised of the Nigerian Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), (a strong supporter of the creation of the Mid-West State) and the Northern People's Congress, (an arch-enemy of the Action Group, the ruling party in Western Nigeria). One of the conditions of the alliance was the immediate creation of the Mid-West State. But this could not be done until after Nigeria had attained independence on October 1, 1960.

In the Federal Legislature, two years later, a motion to create the Mid-West State was moved on Thursday, March 22nd, 1962 by the Prime Minister thus:

> that this House approve a proposal for an alteration to Section 3 of the Constitution of the Federation of Nigeria for the purpose of establishing a fourth region within the Federation of Nigeria consisting territorially of Benin Province in Western Nigeria including Akoko-Edo District in Afenmai Division, and Delta Province in Western Nigeria including Warri Division and Warri Urban Town-ship area (Balewa and Epelle, 1964:115).

This motion was carried. And so the Mid-Western Nigeria became the fourth autonomous region in Nigerian Federation on August 9, 1963 after a plebiscite conducted to ascertain the wish of the people.

On January 15, 1966, the Federal Government of Nigeria was overthrown by a Military coup. On May 27, 1967, the Head of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon, by decree, created twelve States out of the old four Regions. The Mid-West State was constituted as one of these twelve States.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Mid-West State of Nigeria lies approximately between 5°00'E and 6°45'E and between latitude 4°45'N and 7°30'N. It covers an area of 14,922 square miles, and is the eighth largest of the twelve States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The population is 3.24 million by 1973 census provisional figures, and in this regard ranks ninth in the Federation. It shares common boundaries with Kwara, Western, East Central and Rivers States (see map included in Appendix A).

The Mid-West State is a well defined geographical unit bounded by natural boundaries, namely rivers. The main axis runs from

north to south for approximately 200 miles, while its greatest width is about 110 miles.

Three large rivers flow through the State southwards to the delta; the Niger in the east, and the Siluko and Osse Rivers in the west. The State can be divided into three physiographic regions, namely, the northern, the central and the southern sectors. The highest and most rugged areas lie at the outlying northern section where highlands of over 600 feet can be observed. The corridors are covered with weathered fertile soils and mixed vegetation, and constitute very rich agricultural land. These are the areas of population concentration in Akoko-Edo, Etsakon and Owan Divisions. The Edion-Orle lowlands, which separate the northern from the southern region is a belt of low-lying flat area of some 200 feet above sea level covered with dense vegetation and its climate and rainfall make it suitable for the cultivation of yams. Part of these low-lands consists of clay shales which give rise to a major pottery industry.

Within the central sector are the Ishan and Asaba Plateaus split by the Igukpu River. The Ishan plateau reaches a maximum elevation of 1,500 feet above sea level and slopes southwards gradually. The soil is porous and has no surface drainage. Part of the northern sector is in the rain shadow which has produced a savannah but the table-land is covered with light forest that makes the area a surplus yam producing area in the State. The eastern part, which is comprised of flat alluvial flood plain of the Niger is ideal rice land. Indeed it is one of the richest in the country. Illushi, located in this area,

is a major rice producing and marketing centre for Nigeria. Much of the Asaba plateau has been cleared as a result of high density of population and the land is now mainly secondary bush and farm land. The soil is fertile and the areas around Agbor and Ubiaruku are some of the yam exporting areas of the State. The water table, lying between 300 and 850 feet below surface, is a problem from the standpoint of an adequate source of water supply (Sada, 1973:5).

The southern sector, which covers both the Benin and Warri regions, is virtually a level plain sloping from an elevation of 400 feet in the northern margin to sea level in the south. It is heavily dissected by rivers which have their headwaters in the upper coastal plain. The most important of these rivers is River Osse which cuts through the clay lowlands. The rainfull in this area is heavy and has produced a dense forest. The Warri deltaic plain lies between elevation of 50 and 100 feet and almost imperceptible gradient. The lower parts merge with the water table and turn into swamps.

CLIMATE

In most parts of the northern area, the temperature is constantly above 70°F., while the maximum is 87°F. The lowest temperatures in the State occur during rainy seasons. The discomforts arising from high temperatures in the State is caused by humidity. This is greatly relieved by virtue of the unimpeded circulation of air which the traditional family compound system permits.

There are two major seasons:

(1) The rainy season which commences during the latter part of March or the first part of April and extends to October, chequered by a brief dry period in August. Rainfall is heaviest in July with the average being some 100 inches in the coastal areas to 60 inches in the extreme north.

(2) The dry season begins in early November and predominates until late March or early April. December to February are usually marked by dry winds of the harmattan (a dry, cool wind from the north-east).

These variations in climatic seasons affect the type of crops the farmers grow as well as the play patterns of the children: for example, "Eko" game (a form of archery played outdoors) is not popular in the rainy season.

THE ECONOMY

Agriculture is the economic mainstay of the State. Locally, agriculture accounts for about 56 percent of the gross domestic economy. At the moment, mechanization of farming is being carried out in the State experiment farms and a few privately owned ones, but the change will require time and extensive education programs.

The Mid-West produces annually 85 percent of Nigeria's rubber and 3.2 percent of its cocoa. In addition, an average of 7,450 tons of palm kernels are exported annually from the State.[3] Cotton, which is badly needed for the textile industry in the State,

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[3] Mid-Western Nigeria Handbook, (Benin City: Information Department, 1970, p. 18).

is still in small scale production. A fish farming system was introduced in the State in 1968 but the impact of this industry is yet to be felt in any significant degree. Plans are on hand to map out the territorial waters of the State for marine life and physical environment. Coupled with the development of fish farming, a poultry industry has recently been introduced with the nucleus of the development scheme located in the Ogba poultry centre. This centre, at present, produces over 2,000 day-old chicks weekly for distribution to farms in the State. There are, currently, three cattle farms and these will soon be transferred into a suitable central big farm at Igarra at Akoko-Edo Division. The three piggeries in the State sell weaners to farmers at subsidized prices. The only Feed Mill located at Benin City is not meeting the needs of the farmers and plans are in hand to have additional ones constructed. The rapid emergence of these agricultural developments has placed an inordinate strain on the veterinary division of the ministry and an expansion in the area will soon be a necessity.

The hardwood forests have yet to be heavily harvested but recently a plywood plant, the only one in Nigeria, has been located at Sapele in the Mid-West State. It exports annually about 1.2 million cubic feet of plywood and lock-board.

Over the past few years a number of new industries have emerged in the Mid-West State area. Mineral oil and natural gas have been discovered in some parts of the State, notably Ughelli in the delta area and Gelegele near Benin. The natural gas is being used to generate electricity for many parts of Nigeria, and the oil wells

which have been discovered in the delta area are producing petroleum products for export at an average daily output of about 500,000 barrels. In addition to these fossil fuels, about 62 million tons of lignite near Asaba is available for mining. The presence of limestone at Ukpilla in Etsakon Division has made the siting of a cement factory there necessary. The glass factory at Ughelli in Eastern Urhobo has also been made possible by a large deposit of silica.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LIFE-STYLES

It has been reasonably well established that the various ethnic groups in Mid-Western Nigeria migrated from Benin (Talbot, 1926: Murdock, 1945). This discussion, therefore, will be based on the common and distinctive cultural features of these peoples.

Physical Layout of Settlements. While villages vary as to size and types of structures, they are usually characterized by one main road which runs through the village with the houses being built on either side. In general, these houses are built some distance from the road, and a large playground in front of the house is thereby made a feature of the landscape architecture. These large playgrounds in front of the houses serve as an arena for many of the religio-socio-dramatic performances which are characteristic of the people, as well as for children's games. A second general pattern is where a bush path leads to an open central arena with houses built in a circular fringe. These houses are homes for several extended families. The typical village is based essentially on an agricultural pattern

of life. There are also towns such as Benin, Warri, Sapele, Agbor, Asaba, Ibiaja, Auchi and Bomadi with modern amenities.

Linguisitic Relationship. The Edo language is spoken throughout the Benin Kingdom with only minor variations. Edo dialects are spoken in Ishan and in section of the northern area such as Owan and Itsako. Although the Urhobo and Isoko dialects are somewhat influenced by Edo proper, generally speaking they are quite unintelligible to the people of the Benin Kingdom.

Kinship Groups. The family structure is composed of several layers. The immediate or nuclear family consists of members who are tied together by common marital or parental relationships. Father is the head who settles disputes and represents the family in all religious ceremonies and other important meetings. He is also the intermediary between the family and the family ancestors who are believed to protect the family. Thus a father is both the religious and social head of the family. His word is final in most issues. Where a man has more than one wife, the nuclear pattern is accordingly modified so that the household includes wives and children of the different wives. The common and the universally desired marriage pattern is polygyny. There are various systems of differential marriage-payments. A full marriage-payment secures the affiliation of all children of the marriage to the husband's lineage while with smaller payments the children either go to the wife's father's lineage or are divided between the two groups. Among some Edo, although not among any of the groups studied here, there is evidence of a double descent system whereby every individual belongs both to

a localized patrilineage and to a dispersed matrilineal group.

The first wife has control over the other wives irrespective of her chronological age. She is the only one who can be conferred with the chieftaincy title with the husband. The Edo-speaking people not only show a marked patrilineal bias in their kinship and lineage organization but also an emphasis in primogeniture. In areas where chieftaincy is hereditary, the firstborn son assumes the title from the father. A firstborn son is accorded a special place in the family especially when it comes to sharing of the late father's property.

Most nuclear and polygynous families are parts of layer family units: the extended family wherein an elderly man lives in a compound with his wives, unmarried children and his married sons and their wives and offspring. In such a case each nuclear segment resides in a portion of the compound, but the whole is under the headship of the elder male. It is to be noted that residence then on marriage is patrilocal.

Sometimes these extended families are of a joint nature in that several married brothers with their married sons and families will reside in neighboring houses.

Family groupings are often affiliated with one another so as to form patrilineages. Members of a single patrilineage tend to prevail in a given neighborhood or even a whole village. As an individual has obligations to his family so also he has obligations to fellow members of his patrilineage.

To any of these groupings may be added divorced and widowed mothers, daughters and sisters.

An only son who remains in his father's house may continue to farm jointly with his father during the latter's lifetime. On the other hand, when a man has a number of sons, the senior sons may begin to farm on their own even while living in the same house as their father. In most cases, sons farm pieces of land adjoining that of their father in order to assist the latter.

Each of the types of family listed above is a quasi-political unit in that its members are under the immediate control, for certain purposes, of the oldest male who can apply sanctions against them. The three kinds of family form a hierarchy in so far as the head of the nuclear or compound family may be under the authority of the head of a joint family who may in turn be subject to the head of his extended family.

A family head has the right to apply physical sanctions against those under his authority though he would not attempt to beat his adult sons and brothers. In each household or family there is a series of hierarchies which determines the moral rights and obligations of the members towards each other.

Widows pass to the heirs of the deceased in his patrilineage, generally to his sons or, failing sons, to his brothers.

Age Grading. Another common feature among the Edo-speaking peoples is the stratification of the male population into age grades organized on a village-wide basis. In some ethnic groups,

initiation ceremonies and the functions of these age grades[4] are more significant than in others. The younger age grades are responsible for such communal work as building the local markets, bridges, schools and health centres. They also perform some specific roles in certain of the traditional festivals and ceremonies. Within each group, members work as a team in rotation on each member's farm. The roles and responsibilities shift for the older age grades who help in the administration of the village or town. Disputes among members or among families are sometimes settled within the age grade organization. Another important function of the age grade organization is the preservation of the customs and traditions of the people. They are involved in the social and ritual activities, and have the power to sanction defaulters. In some areas, the authority of the village is vested in the age grades.

Political Structure. Hereditary rulers are characteristic of the Benin[5] and Ishan sections of the Edo-speaking peoples and are found among some parts of Urhobo. The firstborn son inherits the father's chieftaincy title and the headship at the death of the father.

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[4] Age grade. All children born within three consecutive years are initiated into an age grade at about the age of eighteen, and are given a name from the traditional list.

The children initiated at a given time constitute a "set" which in the course of time passes through the several grades. A western parallel is a University class of 1979 - a "set" - which passes through first, second, third and fourth year "grades" together.

[5] "Bini" is used by Europeans as an adjective and for the dominant people of the Benin Kingdom and their language.

The hereditary chieftaincy is fully developed, and is accompanied by a system of state ranks and titles.

The sacred kingship is the focal point of the Benin political system. The Oba (king) is credited with all kinds of magical powers. Apart from his ritual and economic prerogatives, there are certain well-defined mechanisms through which the Oba maintains or maintained his position as political head of state. In Owan and some parts of Urhobo, there are "title-associations" which can be entered by any freeborn male of the community for which it is operative, by the payment of fees to the existing members and by participating in certain rites (Bradbury, 1957:15). These titles are most important where hereditary chieftaincy is lacking. Membership is essential for any person wishing to exercise political authority. Seniority is generally reckoned by "title-age," that is, by relative date of admission to a particular association. The man with the most senior title, heads the village in both Owan and some parts of Urhobo where the age grades have political significance.

Social Statification. The three-tier age grade system is common to nearly all the Edo-speaking peoples. In the past, there were the free men, bondsmen and the slaves. The slaves constituted the main labor force for the nobles and they were also used for sacrifices to the gods. There are no slaves today. The practice of bondsmen is fast fading out. Today, there are notables, wealthy citizens and commoners.

There is no uniformity in the traditional institutions with regard to the punishment of offences or the settlement of disputes among the study groups. But one thing which is uniform is that punishments are often severely administered either by the age groups, the family head, or the elders. Generally, most of the penalties are fines, flogging, compensation, ordeals, oaths and ostracism. People suspected to possess witchcraft were, in the past, given sasswood poisoning. The practice is declining today.

Economic Organization. At the village level, the majority of the people are farmers. The modes of agriculture are still relatively traditional whereby farmers use simple tools such as hoes, cutlasses and axes in the cultivation of the crops. Yams, cassava, maize, rice and beans constitute the staple food crops of the people, and they are harvested manually.

By tradition, the bush is cleared by men between the months of November and January, following which the area is burnt in order to release nutrients back into the soil. Both women and children assist in the planting and harvesting of crops. In some parts of the State, mounds are made in which a variety of crops are planted, whereas in other areas holes are dug for planting yams which are the main crops. Many crops are planted on the same piece of land but each crop is specially located. Young children are usually taught how these crops are spaced. Depending on the type of soil, a farmer would plant either cocoa or rubber on the same piece of land in addition to the crops listed above.

In some villages the farmers have joint ownership of barns to store crops, both for consumption and for sale. After two or three years, a farmer would shift to new portions of land, and the cocoa and rubber are left behind to grow into plantations. The regular aspects of farm work falls under the domain of the husband. Although his many wives and children constitute his labor force, certain aspects of farm work such as clearing, felling of trees and making of mounds for the planting of crops are done by the communal efforts of the farmers and the age grades.

Within an ethnic group, like the Owan, land is owned by lineage groups, and a farmer is allowed as much land as he wishes to cultivate. People from one ethnic group can farm and settle with another ethnic group. Boundary disputes among ethnic groups mainly erupt as a consequence of political problems rather than farming. Farmers usually respect their traditional boundaries. In contemporary times, ethnic groups tend to resist large-scale farming by non-members, except in cases where the Government moves to establish large-scale modern experimental farms.

Other aspects of farm work which are of economic importance in this State are the collection of palm kernels and palm oil. These are jointly done by every member of the family. The main duty of the men is to cut the palm fruit by climbing the tall palm trees, a difficult task at the best of times. The women and children are responsible for the processing although men sometimes help.

The fact that a section of Mid-Western State borders on the sea has produced another dimension to the economic fabric of the area.

In the delta region fishing is done on a large scale, and the fish are sold to purchase other food items.

While it is the practice that men, women and children work together on the farms, by tradition, only women, assisted by their children, do the cooking of food. It is taboo for a married man to be found in the kitchen, cooking or assisting the wife. Women are also not expected to make mounds or fell trees in the farms.

Although every family is capable of providing for most of their needs, this is not always practicable. In the village, therefore, there are those who specialize in various crafts. These are the blacksmiths, the carvers, the weavers, dyers, the pot makers and so on, who supply those items that the dedicated farmers are unable to produce either as a result of lack of time or due to lack of skill (Figure 2).

A social and economic feature that is often prevalent among agriculturally-based groups is the market days, which, in the Mid-Western State, are held every five days. In village markets, women sell surplus farm products and fish, while craftsmen and women also sell their crafts (see Figure 3). Because many crops and crafts are unique to certain areas, people from other ethnic groups frequently patronize the village markets of other groups. Such cash crops as cocoa or rubber are sold either to some individual dealers or to the cooperative societies, which, in turn, market these products to larger wholesale distributors.

Child Rearing. The newborn child is received everywhere

Figure 2. A basket weaver.

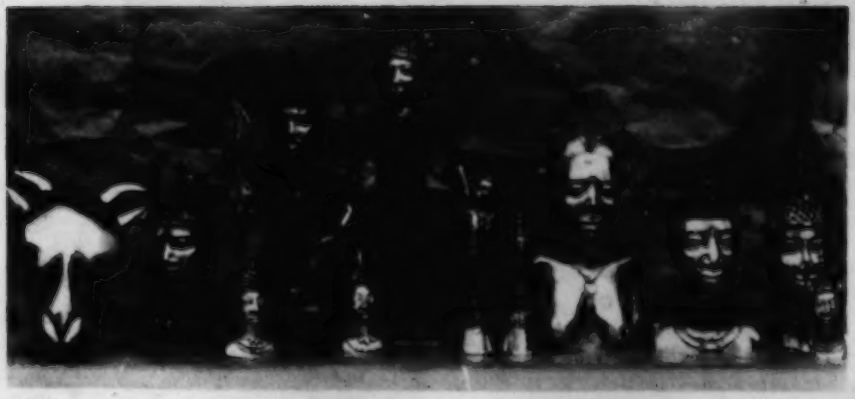

Figure 3. Brass and wooden carvings.

Figure 4. A festival dance.

Figure 5. The 'Iyase' and Chiefs at Igwe festival.

with warmth, and treated with indulgence. Children are "blessings" and one cannot have too many. No stigma is attached to children born out of wedlock. Unlike some cultural groups in Nigeria, twins are happily received. Male children appear to be particularly highly valued and are given greater social recognition than are female children. Breast feeding is the traditional practice and this is given on demand. Hard food is introduced early to the child, and weaning, which in most cases is abrupt and severe, occurs after two, three or more years. Children of all the wives eat together as food is usually not shared out individually. As the children get older, at about the age of seven, the boys eat with their father, and girls with their mother. Parents do not eat together. Table manners are meticulously taught and enforced.

Greetings play a particularly important role in the interpersonal relationships. Husbands must be greeted by their wives and children the first thing in the morning. Depending on the traditional practices and habits of the tribe, young people and children bend, bow or kneel upon greeting their elders. Failure to do this earns a child some reprimand, beating or both.

If the baby toilets while the mother is eating and any part falls into the food, the tradition is that the mother should not abandon the food. The tradition holds only for babies up to the age of three months. When a baby wets a visitor, it is regarded as greetings, but as from the age of about nine months toilet training becomes severe. A grown-up child who still wets the bed is either flogged or is ridiculed

in the presence of his or her age mates. Age seems synonymous with strength and wisdom. No parent expects his child to be beaten or led by those junior to him in age. A child is severely reprimanded or flogged for failing to be respectful to his seniors in the traditional way. If a mother has to resolve a tricky case, the mere threat that the child would be referred to the father to account for his misconduct makes him behave well.

Every adult regards himself or herself a parent or guardian with regard to the training or upbringing of the children. It is rare to find parents offended if any adult reprimands or beats a child for misbehavior. Children, at early age, are taught to share things with their mates.

Many children go naked, although girls wear beads. Circumcision is done for the boys and clitoridectomy for girls.

Festivals, Ceremonies and Rites. In this study no attempt is made to give details of the many festivals and other traditional rites among the peoples as most of them are shrouded with secrecy (see Figures 4 & 5). This has made it impossible for both the ethnographers and the researcher to record these events correctly and completely. The following comments are intended to simply note the role of these social phenomena among the people studied.

The sacred beliefs that help to deyelop the patter of life of the people can be classified thus:

(a) Ceremonies associated with ancestral gods, whose worship was passed from father to the children through the generations.

The deities are represented by carved sticks or baked clay images. To these gods, goats, chickens (and in the old days, human beings) are sacrificed.

(b) Ceremonies associated with village deities which serve as the focus of worship for the whole village.

(c) Ceremonies associated with the concept of the universal God who controls all other deities.

If, for example, there has been too much rain or if the harvest has been poor on the farms, it is believed that these misfortunes must have been caused by some aggrieved gods. These beliefs and fears are associated with the many festivals, ceremonies and social occasions.

The daily routine is that the head of the family requests the blessing and protection of the ancestral deity before the days work. Market days are resting days for the farmers and are also days set apart for social occasions and for sacrifices to the gods.

Witchcraft and the fear of witches present real problems to the people. Every form of ill-health or death is associated with witchcraft.

THE STUDY GROUPS

Although much has been said above about the common origin and other cultural affinities of the Edo-speaking peoples, each of the four groups under study (Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo) exhibits certain distinct linguistic, social and other cultural features. The highlights of these distinct features are discussed below.

Benin. Benin Division occupies the western and central parts of the State, with Benin City, as the heart of the ancient Benin Empire, being the capital city. At present it has a population of over one hundred thousand, whereas that of the adjoining villages ranges between one thousand and less than four hundred. During the height of the Benin Empire, the capital city was encircled by a massive earth wall with ditches some six miles in circumference, and the relics can still be seen in Benin City today. The Palace was the religious and administrative centre of the Kingdom. There have been remarkably few changes over the years. The main palace buildings comprise three major divisions, each under the administration of a host of chiefs. The strength of the palace organization can be seen as an instrument of centralization and stability.

The City of Benin is divided into a number of wards. Within each ward the male population is stratified in grades roughly parallel to those in the villages. Leadership within the ward is ascribed on a variety of principles. These wards are affiliated to some palace associations through whose leaders they make contact with the Oba (king).

All Benin villages are, by tradition, harmoniously united under their high mystical head, the Oba (king), (see Figure 6). The hereditary chiefs, "Uzama" and two other groups of chiefs "Eghaebho" constitute three great orders of chieftaincy which, among them, are responsible for the continuity and government of the State. The "Uzamas" are the guardians of custom and kingship. They retain considerable prestige and moral authority. The "Iyase" is the leader

(Prime Minister) of the town chiefs. There are hosts of other chiefs each with his own functions. The kings of Benin seem to have had more security of tenure than many of their African counterparts. Of the Oba of Benin, Bradbury has this to say:

> . . . a divine king, the living vehicle for those mystical forces by which his predecessors, from the inception of the dynasty, has ensured the vitality and continuity of the nation . . . to foster his own magical powers and to employ them for the good of his people (Bradbury, 1973:74).

In the village, the predominance of community over kin-group interest is maintained through a three-tier age grade organization -- "Edion," "Ighele" and "Iroghae." The oldest man is the headman or "Odionwere" of the village. In some villages, however, there are hereditary headmen or "Onogie" whose office descends by primogenitary succession. The Onogie's jurisdiction usually encompasses more than a single village. Both "Onogie" and the "Odionwere" form the liaison between the Oba and his people (Bradbury, 1973:50). Both hold their offices at the Oba's will. The village council is made up of the two headmen and the "Edion" age grade. Non-members, including women, may be invited, when necessary, to council meetings. The other two lower age grades perform the communal tasks in the village. Although there is no ceremony in the appointment of the different age grades, there are hereditary practices with which every member must conform.

One other important aspect of the social life of the people is the birth of a new child. There is no stipulation as to the place of birth or who should be present. A woman could give birth to a child either in the husband's house or in her mother's place. When the cord

falls from the child, it is planted in the ground with the seed of a Kola or Coconut tree in the hope that the child will grow like the tree. The naming of the child is on the seventh day after the birth. This is done by the father at the altar of the ancestors.

As has been stated earlier, children, at the age of about seven, are introduced to farm work. Girls accompany their mothers to the common open markets (Figure 7).

Although a majority of the people are farmers, there are many skilled craftsmen. Benin arts and crafts have been objects of serious studies and attraction to scholars. The most famous art works are the bronze casts and statues. Among the members of the community are specialists such as blacksmiths, brass-smiths, leather workers, wood and ivory carvers, tapestry weavers, drum makers, hunters and builders. There are also many different groups of priests, diviners, minstrels and other ceremonial functionaries.

Ishan. The villages that make up Ishan are located in the north-eastern part of the State. It has a population of over two hundred and seventy thousand (according to 1973 census provisional figures). During the collapse of the Igodo dynasty, a prince known as Ikhinvbi migrated to the north, probably to evade justice or escape oppression, to found Ishan, a name which is said to be derived from the word "Esafua" meaning "those who fled." Warriors, messengers and others from Benin joined with Ikhinvbi in the founding of Ishan.

Chieftaincy is hereditary in most parts of Ishan and, in some cases, the Oba of Benin validates the ascendency of the Onogie

Figure 6. The Oba of Benin.

Figure 7. An open market.

to power. The Onogie (Chief and Headman) receives various entitlements from his subjects. All the numerous title holders are collectively called "Ekhaevo" and represent the Onogie in various villages, acting through the Odionwere[6] (Headman). There are no title associations in Ishan as there are in Owan, but like Benin, there are three main age grades.

(1) Egbonughele - These are young boys below the age of twenty who are employed to clear, sweep and maintain farm roads, meeting places, shrines, and during any building period, they fetch water and mix the mud.

(2) Igele or Igbama - These are young men between the ages of twenty and thirty who are no longer engaged in jobs such as those listed above. They are engaged in other types of communal work such as building of houses, helping to stop fire outbreaks and assisting in other emergencies. They are not old enough to participate in full village meetings.

(3) Edion - The Edion are the elders of a village who are not required to do communal work. Their major responsibility resides in their role as governors of the village, and as a consequence, they comprise the village council.

One common initiation ceremony to "Edion" grade is "Irhue" which literaly means "tying on the cloth," and has various social

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[6] In the study groups, the term "Onogie" is used for a title Headman over one or more chiefdoms, that is, a collection of villages. "Odionwere" is a village Headman who is usually the oldest man in the village. In most instances, the "Odionwere" also has a chieftaincy title.

meanings for the various sub-groups in Ishan. The social aspects of life in the village are quite similar to those in Benin.

A newborn child is washed at the front of the house, and the mother at the back when the placenta is buried. When the baby is three months old, the parents entertain their relatives, and a name is given to the child by the father. In many parts of Ishan the first man or woman (who is not a close relative) to enter the house when a child is born becomes the child's guardian for life. A child is nursed and cared for by the parents, other relatives and the guardian -- members of the child's extended family.

Until recently, when pipe-borne water was made available, children were expected to trek long distances to fetch water for household use. In the entire State, water supply has been a problem, but this problem has been most acute in Ishan. Water conservancy practices, which have been inaugurated in the State, have yielded significant changes in the life style of the villages.

Due to the type of soil available, most Ishan farmers do not make mounds for their yams, but rather dig holes in the ground into which the yams are planted. These people also utilize the typical slash and burn form of agriculture.

Not only are the people of Ishan expert farmers but many members of this group are excellent wood-carvers and clay-workers who produce objects for the decoration of shrines and the chiefs houses. This industry was inherited from their forefathers, who migrated from Benin where artisans produced magnificent pieces of art

work including canoe building, a craft which has developed among those people who live near the river Niger. One other very specialized industry is cloth weaving. A very special type of cloth is woven by women at Ewohimi. Other crafts practised are the making of mats, ropes and sisal bags.

The special gymnastic prowess of the Ishan people is worthy of note. Whether this special feature can be attributed to the presence of the red, loose sand which is prevalent or a combination of this and other factors remains to be investigated.

Owan. The Owan Division is located at the north-western part of the State, and derives its name from the main river that bisects the area. It was Oba Ozolua's son Oraekpen who, with others, emigrated from Benin and founded Owan. The Yoruba and Nupe war raids from the west and the north of Nigeria respectively had considerable cultural influence on the people. The Yoruba language is spoken by many people, and there are many Moslems in some villages.

A family in Owan can be described as "a group of people worshipping the spirit of a common grandfather" who is represented by a carved stick known as "Ikute." The "Ikute" remains in the family and is passed onto the most elderly man. As was the case with Benin, age stratification of the male population is an important element in the social structure. The younger ones help in such communal work as building and maintaining public places and markets.

The older ones help in the general administration of the villages. Many minor cases and civil disputes are settled within

the age grades and family groups. Only in very rare cases are disputes taken to the village council. Contrary to Benin and Ish, chieftaincy is not hereditary, and the village head is usually the eldest titled man. Title-associations are very well developed. Age grade initiation occurs once every three years, and each group is given a name from the traditional list. The initiation is a major ceremony and all men and women take part. There are three groups of age sets:

(1) The "Otuisirin" comprises nine age grades in the age set (18 - 50 years). The responsibility of these individuals is to provide the labor foce for the village, and the members can be called upon at any time for any labor service in the village.

(2) The "Otuleha" are the three age grades who have been promoted from the nine age grades of the "Otuisirin," and are usually the most senior age grades. They, together with the title chiefs and the village head, form the council of the Elders. In addition, they constitute the executive arm of the council whose main function it is to administer the town.

(3) The "Edion" are the elders, and each holds the common title known as "Ejere." Membership to title-associations is achieved by payment of fees which are shared by the existing members. A man who is unable to become a member of the title-association has an opprobrious title "Ozo," meaning "a commoner." In a council meeting, commoners are rarely allowed to speak. In addition, commoners are never given full burial rites. In family and village council meetings, women are, on special occasions, allowed to speak.

Land, in most parts of this Division, is particularly suited to the growing of cocoa, and this forms the main cash crops of the region. At present, there has been a considerable decrease of food production as a consequence of the fact that many farmers have concentrated on raising cocoa.

Cooperative farming is non-existent in Owan. The State, however, operates an experimental farm which is located at Waranke.

The Uhonmora people of Owan area are among the best pot makers in the State. This has been made possible because of the presence of special clayey soil. Pots of various types and sizes are produced. Regretably, no attempt is being made to develop this industry. Dying and weaving of clothes are popular in Otwa. Other crafts are carving and soap making.

Customs relating to the birth of children are similar to those of Benin and Ishan in many respects. One significant difference is that in the first two years of a child's life in Owan, there is a special ceremony, the "Oghare," whereby mothers are able to ascertain the birth days and the rightful positions of their children in the age group. (There is no registration of births and deaths in the villages and towns included in this study.) During this ceremony, which is held once a year, (twice only for each child in his life-time) mothers assemble in the most senior child's place. Any child born immediately after one of these ceremonies is the senior of all those born that year. Mothers bring food which is shared by all present. This is the beginning of communal life for the children.

Boys and girls have their own separate "Oghare" ceremony even though they are both initiated into age grade at the age of about eighteen.

Urhobo. The Urhobos occupy the central southern parts of the State, but many of them have migrated to parts of the State and to the neighboring Western State to farm and engage in their most favorite occupation, palm oil production.

Like other Edo-speaking peoples, there exists among the Urhobo's the broad three-fold age grade divisions - young boys, adults and the Elders. There are also age grades for women. But as Bradbury recorded, the pattern of authority appears to vary so much from one tribe to another that it is impossible to generalize satisfactorily (Bradbury, 1957:144). This has been so because of the influences of the various tribes from the eastern and western parts of Nigeria and from Benin that have settled in the Urhobo region. In some areas, there are councils with the "Ovie" (the king) as the head. In others, every dispute is referred to "Ovie" as the sole authority. Many of the age group titles are of Benin origin. Becoming one of the "Odion" title holders involves considerable expense. A man who cannot afford it is passed over. Political authority is vested on the basis of kinship groups, age grades, title-association, priesthood, and sometimes individual wealth. There is no uniformity in the mode of succession to the titles.

Most of Urhobo towns and villages have a stretch of creek or numerous ponds, in close physical proximity, which make the people noted fishermen and expert canoeists. Fish are valued as food, and

without them there could be no feasts. There are many methods of collecting fish:

(a) People collectively bale water out of ponds and rivulets after constructing dams.

(b) Nets are used both by individuals and by groups, who use canoes to create a form of purse seine.

(c) Spears of up to five prongs are also used. These spears are locally made by the blacksmiths.

(d) Hooks, baited with frogs and worms are also used.

(e) Fish traps and barrages are frequently set by the fishermen.

(f) Basket traps are used mainly to catch prawns and small fishes.

(g) On occasion, poison is used in such distant water from the villages.

The Urhobos are great experts in palm oil and palm kernel production. Canoe-building is a major industry. Pottery, basketry and mat-making are widespread. Wooden staffs and figures are carved.

The social life of the people is similar in many respects to those already discussed.

The birth of a child usually takes places in the back verandah of the house. Children are named on the eighth day following birth, and the name is selected by the oldest man in the family. Circumcision is done for both boys and girls, but the process of clitoridectomy is extremely costly. By about the age of six the boys begin to follow

their fathers to the bush, to the streams and ponds, where the fishing is done, or to their place of work on the farms. The girls also begin, about this age, to learn about domestic duties from their mothers. Unlike other parts of the State, Urhobo women tend to be more active farmers than is the case in the other three areas.

Summary. The four cultural groups under study (Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo) are part of the old Benin Kingdom that existed from about the ninth until the eighteenth century. The Benin Empire emerged as a civilizing force in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and attracted early European contact.

The Mid-West State, as it is today, is a nucleus of the old Benin Empire. It is a well defined geographical unit bounded by rivers.

The physiographic features of fertile soils, mixed vegetation and a good amount of rainfall account for a predominantly agricultural State. As a result of available natural resources and modern technology, new industries have emerged. Many of the villages are fast being transformed into modern towns.

Among the Benin, Ishan and to some extent, parts of Urhobo, are formal centralized political structure with the king "Oba" and "Onogie" or "Ovie" respectively as the aristocratic head. In contrast, the political structure in Owan and some parts of Urhobo is more diffused and decentralized with a form of formal local government on the village level. A common characteristic feature of social organization is the stratification of the male population into age grades organized

on a village level. It is only in Urhobo that there are female age grades. These age grades perform important political and social function in the community.

The family structure in the four cultural groups is composed of several layers -- the nuclear, joint and extended family. The universally desired form of marriage is polygyny and families are patrilineal. Newborn babies are received with warmth and treated with indulgence, but as the children grow up, training becomes severe in form of reprimands and corporal punishments for misconduct.

While the majority of the people are farmers, there are those who specialize in various crafts. Many of the festivals, ceremonies and rites are shrouded with secrecy. But on the whole, the people are bound together by their very respected traditions and customs.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE GAMES OR PLAYFORMS

The game structures of the four groups of Edo-speaking peoples who formed the core of this study were noteworthy for several germaine reasons. In the first instance, the great variety of structures, the number of heterosexual-based games, the extent of the age range of the participants and the implements used were of special significance. Most games required a minimum of group organization and preset times for participation were not frequently required. On many occasions, the services of an umpire were not needed. Participants would mutually play to the rules of the games.

Although some of the games described below are associated with some rituals, no attempt is made either to interprete or give details of these rituals as they are shrouded with secrecy. The focus is on the children's play-forms or play-acts of these said rituals. Custom would not permit children to "play" the real ritual if at all they know.

Some agility exercises that do not quite fit the definition of a game are included mainly because such play-forms help to socialize the children. There is one term for all play-forms in these cultures.

Wrestling activities are not included as games because, among these cultures, they are not voluntary control activities. Anger, frustration and hostility are often precursors of these

activities and as a consequence they were not deemed a part of the game structure of the study group.

All the games that could be collected from literature, oral description, personal experience and observation were recorded. No sampling was done. The following descriptions are based upon the materials gathered during the field work phase. In some cases two or three games of a similar type have been described in order to create an image of the diversity of game structure from group to group among the Edo.

In Bradbury's ethnographic survey of South-Western Nigeria (the Benin Kingdom) already referred to, Asaba was included in Benin Division.

But because of the close proximity of Asaba to the neighboring State (East Central State) inhabited by the Ibos, the people's (Asaba) way of life has been greatly influenced by their neighbors and no study about the people was done.

The games of Asaba were collected and were not subjected to analysis. They are kept in Appendix B.

URHOBO

1. ISSE. Isse was a game which drew participants from boys and girls between the ages of four and twelve. Apparently there was no specific place designated where the game was to be played. In point of fact, it could be played both indoors and outdoors. The number of players fell between two and six with the limiting factor being the quantity of Isse seeds which were available. These seeds (Isse) were

usually collected when farmers undertook to clear the bushland for their farms. The seeds were dried and stored away so that they could be used all the year round.

The rule structure was basically the following pattern. As soon as two or more players agreed to play, they seated themselves in a circle with the Isse seeds placed in the centre. The game was started with a player taking a handful of seeds which were thrown into the air and caught on the back of the hand. The quantity of seeds so caught were again tossed into the air off the back of the hand, and the player then attempted to catch them in the palm. The player was restricted to the use of one hand. The seeds caught on this second toss were kept. The other players follow one at a time proceeding counter-clockwise around the circle. The seeds caught by each on the first round became the object for gain or loss on subsequent rounds of play.

If, on the second and subsequent rounds, the number of seeds caught in the palm was odd, the player to the right had to give an equal number of seeds to the tosser. If, however, the number of seeds caught was even then the tosser surrendered the seeds to the player on his right. Some skill was required by good players, as well as good fortune.

In the event that a player lost all of his seeds he was given a second opportunity to continue in the game in the following manner. The person to whom the seeds were surrendered secretly placed a few seeds in his palm and asked the unfortunate mate to guess if the number

was odd or even. If the guess was correct, the seeds were given to the player; if not, the player withdrew and the game continued.

No evidence was uncovered as to the origin of this game, and in fact the game appeared to be of limited popularity in that it was not found among the Owans and Ishans. Children play the game throughout the rainy and dry season but because of the skill dimension and hand-eye coordination, it was not played during the moonlit periods.

The scarcity of Isse seeds, due to the very distant farms, makes the games not as popular as it was in the past.

2. ASEDJEVWO. Asedjevwo is a common variation of Isse with a few significant changes. The game tended to be popular among boys and girls between the ages of four and ten with number of players being restricted by the quantity of seeds available. No specific space requirements were stipulated and time limits are non-existent. There is no specific or formal arrangement of players. At the outset, all of the seeds were shared equally by the players and one participant initiated the game by secretly placing a number of seeds in his palm and asking the person next to him to guess whether the number was ase (an odd number) or odi (an even number). If the guess was right, the player forfeited all of the seeds he held in his hand. If the guess was wrong, the player was paid an equal number of seeds to those in the palm. A participant without seeds withdrew from the game and the last remaining player was named the winner.

3. ODO RERE ODO. Odo rere odo is a game of endurance that is played by both sexes of Urhobo children but which is a particular

favourite among girls. Two groups of equal number are needed to create a playing unit and the odd person, should one be present, waits in the sidelines to join the group on the next round. This person invariably joins in with the singing. A considerable amount of space is required and as a consequence, the game is principally played outdoors in the streets or at the back of the house. A number of pebbles or seeds are gathered and the two groups of children form up in rows facing each other at a distance of some ten to fifteen yards. (This distance is varied according to the age of the players.) Each group selects its own leader, most frequently on the basis of age, a principle followed by the adult Urhobo in selecting their leaders. The leaders decide on the number of seeds to be used and then they commence the game. The leader of one group, holding all of the seeds for that group, hops from his position to the other group, circles the group and then returns "home" where he hands seeds one at a time to each of his fellow players. Once the player starts to hop towards the opposing side he must not change legs. If the trailing leg touches the ground, that person is disqualified. Should the player drop a seed, it can be recovered without penalty. The process continues until all the seeds have been given out to one side. It is then the turn for the opposing side to follow the same pattern. When all the rounds are made, the team which has fewer players disqualified is the winner (see Figure 8).

Throughout the whole period of play, players of one team sings a song to cheer on the active player thus:

Odo rere odo

Odo rere odo kpo ovo.

This song provides a beat or rhythm for the active player. The game is played all year round.

4. OKO. A favourite game among boys, aged about five to twelve, was the street game, Oko. An indefinite number of players could participate and the game was popular during moonlit[1] periods. The only equipment required was a ball some 3" to 5" in diameter and improvised from the trunk and leaves of plantains and banana plants. The youngsters themselves would construct these balls by weaving the fibrous materials into a sphere which is light in weight but not very durable.

One player was designated as "It" and was given the ball. The other players scattered (in a designated area) in an attempt to avoid being hit by the ball when it was thrown by "It." Any player, upon being struck by the ball, became the new "It" and the game continued until ended by the group leader. The last "It" was often ridiculed by the other players as being the one with the most offensive body odour.[2] As a mark of this stigma, the last "It" had to retain the ball until the next game. The ball by this time is tattered, dirty and this coupled with the natural and strong odour of the plantain makes it a "fitting tribute" to this player.

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[1] The term moon-light refers to the period of half to full moon at which time the area is brightly lighted by the clean white light permitting many forms of activity. It should be noted that daylight and dark periods are approximately equal all year round in Nigeria due to its proximity to the equator.

[2] A person with a strong body odour is one who was not bathed properly when he was born. It is a social stigma.

5. ATEGUA. Boys and girls between the ages of five and twelve play this game mainly outdoors. There is a similar game in many parts of the State popularly known as Okeleke Okeleke where sticks are used. But in Ategua, palm kernels are used. This is expected as there are many palm trees in this part of the State.

The players all sit in a circle, each with a palm kernel. To the rhythm of a song, each player taps the ground with the palm kernel. But to the rhythm of the refrain of the song, the palm kernel is passed continuously to the next person anti-clockwise. It does happen that some players are unable to keep to the rhythm and find themselves in possession of more than one palm kernel at a time. At other times, some players deliberately keep out of the rhythm to make the next player possess more than one kernel at one time. The only rule in the game is that anyone in possession of two palm kernels is eliminated. No one is allowed to pass more than one palm kernel at a time. There are periodic stops to check defaulters.

6. EMENI RE METE. During the moonlit periods of the dry season, the young girls (aged 7 - 12 years) in Urhobo frequently participate in an activity which is termed Emini re Mete. The girls sit close together in two lines facing inwards. The positions are established so that one player's legs are extended alternately between those of the person opposite and the facing players grasp the toes of two different people (see Figure 9). It is usual for an even number of girls to participate but occasionally an odd number can participate.

The object of the game is to toss a pad or bundle (frequently

composed of one of the girls' small loin clothes) in such a way that the pad is projected off the end. The two end teams attempt to keep the bundle "in play" on the line for if the pad or bundle should fall to the ground on their end they must withdraw from the game. If the pad or bundle falls to the ground between the legs of the players it is put back into play without forfeit or punishment.

As the vigorous up and down movement of the legs continues, the players chant this rhythm:

Emini Re Mete

Gbe Gbe Re Gbe

Ki Ru Rue Rn Kerhe

Literally translated the song means that this pad, like other pads for carrying loads, is a "flowing river." (The pad is like those used by people to ease their burden as they carry their loads. The concept of "flowing river" would be akin to the "flowing" of goods along the village paths as people carry foodstuffs, water and other materials to and from the village.)

A game with similar outward characteristics is played by the girls in Owan but the social interpretation is different.

7. OMANU RA YO GU. This is a game for boys and girls. It is based on the belief that one of the local gods or idols (Orogun) accepts whatever offering she has been offered. The gods are believed to inhabit the bush that surrounds the village and as a consequence this game is played at the periphery of the village and usually at dusk. It is also a belief that evil spirits are more active in the night than

during the day. The player who is designated the "caller" who physically tags other players, represents the priest of the gods and so anyone caught by the priest must surrender himself or herself to the gods.

In the following manner, one child draws a circle on the ground with the right foot. He stands at the centre of the circle while others place only their right foot at the edge of the circle. One person is the "caller". He calls, "whatever is given to Orogun!" the rest respond, "Orogun accepts!". As this is being repeated, they move round the circle anti-clockwise. When the "caller" says "The last to leave the circle," all respond, "Orogun takes him." With this they all run out of the circle, chased by the "caller." Anyone touched by the "caller" is the victim who immediately announces to the others that he had been caught. In order to redeem himself, the victim has to chase others to catch whoever is unable to run back into the circle. Running into the circle represents safety. If he succeeds, then the person caught becomes the "caller" and the game is repeated. But if he fails to catch any person, this victim is carried shoulder high by all the players and thrown into a nearby bush. He runs back to join his mates.

Although some of the "victims" have expressed disapproval of the cruel treatment, yet the fun of the game is never lost.

8. EJE EGBO. This game which is played in another part of the district is very similar to Omanu Ra Yo Gu described above. But in this village, certain virgin forests at different terminal points of the town are dedicated to the habitat of the spiritual goddesses. Annually there are celebrations in honor of these goddesses and at that period

both adults and children keep away from these spots.

This game is played by about twenty to thirty children, both boys and girls. A very large circle is drawn on the ground with the foot. One child represents the spirit from the virgin forests, and remains at the centre of the circle. He shouts "Eje-Egbo" to his mates who stand outside the circle and they in turn respond "Gbo!". The "spirit" child then explains that whoever he catches becomes the new spirit. He chases his mates who run to all directions. But as soon as any of them runs back to the circle, the player is safe. Anyone caught plays the "spirit" and the game is repeated.

9. IBI HE-E-E. This is one version of the "Breathholding Game" that is common in the State. It is mainly played by girls and in the open space during moonlight, apparently because of the fresh air needed. Quite often boys act as a source of disruption by doing or saying funny things to distract the girls. The exercise is a test to determine how long a girl can hold her breath. Any girl who breaks her song becomes a loss to her group (see Figure 10).

In this particular verson, fourteen girls formed two groups of seven on each side. Each group formed a row facing the other group. the distance between the two groups is about fifteen feet, (depending on the age of the children) which is shorter than that of another version which is about twenty to thirty feet. In this one, a player is expected to cover the distance twelve times. A player from one group holds six seeds or pebbles and sings "Ibi-He-e-e" prolonging the "He-e-e" as he runs with short steps to the other group and back to hand a seed

Figure 8. Odo Rere Odo.

Figure 9. Emini re mete.

Figure 10. Ibi He-E.

to each member of her group. If she breaks the song before she completes the total rounds, her group loses a point. After every member of the two groups has had a turn, the group with the greater number of successful ones is the winner. The game can be repeated.

10. IBIEFRE. In many ways the game of Ibiefre has the characteristics of the European game of "Jacks" and it is also similar to Isse. Any number of players, usually girls between the ages of seven and twelve may play. The girls gather a large number of dried uncracked palm nuts approximately about two hundred which they crack, remove the kernels[3] and place in the centre of the ring or circle. All players then sit around the nuts and the first player (usually the one who initiated the game) commences the game by taking two handfuls of nuts, tosses them in the air simultaneously and attempts to catch them on the back of the hand. The player tosses the nuts a second time and attempts to catch them in her palms. During these two processes, some of the nuts fall to the floor or the earth. Having captured a number of dried palm nuts the same player continues by tossing one of her "captives" into the air and attempts to seize as many nuts as possible from the centre ring before catching the nut which she had earlier thrown into the air. If she fails to catch the nut at any time, she surrenders any nut that could not be used to collect those in the centre of the circle.

The players continue around the circle in a counter-clockwise direction and the play continues until the nuts in the circle are all captured. The person who amasses the greatest quantity by the end of the game is declared the winner.

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[3]Palm nuts are hard-seeded fruits from palm trees. The hard seed is the "kernel."

11. UBI KIA. Boys and girls between the ages of five and ten love this game. It is always played at the front of the house. The leader represents a mother whose traditional place is the home. The boys and girls who participate in the game are all children to this "mother." This "mother" has a gift for the children which she wants the children to struggle to possess.

The game takes this form. The "mother" stands at the front of the house with the gift. All the other children stand outside, a little distance from the "mother" who holds a round object, possibly a fruit, and calls on other children thus:

	"Emone O!"	They answer: "Eh!"
	"Emone O!"	They answer: "Eh!"
	"Ubi kia O!"	They answer: "Eh!"
	"Ewo de mu rie O!"	They answer: "Eh!"
	"Ubi kokoroko!"	
Meaning:	"My children!"	"Yes!"
	"My children!"	"Yes!"
	"A seed is coming" (money)	"Yes!"
	"For you to buy food"	"Yes!"
	"The seed (money) falls!"	

And she throws the object to the children. Any child who gets hold of the object now acts as the mother and does the throwing. The game continues.

12. FEKO FEKO. Children of both sexes between the ages of five and eleven enjoy this game during moonlight. The greater the number

of children in a group, the happier they are. A leader, perhaps one who has a good voice leads others in the song for the game.

The players form a circle joing hands. The leader leads and they all sing this song:

Feko Feko Feko Iye Iye

Feko Feko Feko Iye Iye

Ofagbe boroma no Feko

E - e - e - e ofagbe boroma no Feko Iyeye.

As they sing, they dance round in a circle. One is allowed to dance to the centre of the circle and also to change places in the circle. While singing and dancing, all are expected to stoop at the end of the song. The last to do this is eliminated. A player so eliminated goes to the centre of the circle to help both in singing and enforcing the rule. At the initial stage, all the players take part in pointing out the player who stoops last. The game continues in this fashion until the children tire of the activity.

13. EKO. Eko is one of the many marble[4] games in the State. Many marble games are played both by adults and children alike. Over the years, Eko has become a game for children only in some villages. A piece of wood carved with twelve holes (as in Figure 11) is the ideal apparatus for the game. But children usually dig holes in the ground. Forty-eight marbles, four in each hole are used. The game can be played by two, three, four or six players. This permits equal number of holes to players. There are many versions of this game of marbles. The rules are few but are strictly observed.

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[4]Marbles are special seeds that are round with hard glassy outer covering and measures about 1 1/3 mm in diameter. There are two kinds and both grow wild in the local bush.

Only one marble at a time is dropped into each hole anti-clockwise while playing. Only four marbles in a player's hole can be won by his opponent.

Where the wooden frame is used, the game can be played both indoors and at the front of the houses. Marble games are played all the year round. A game of Eko by two players is described below.

Each player possesses six holes. There are four marbles in each hole. The senior, by age, of the two starts the game. The player takes all four marbles from one hole and drops one marble in each hole anti-clockwise and where the last marble drops, he carries all the marbles in that hole and continues dropping until the last marble drops in an empty hole. The opponent starts with that one marble which he places in the next hole and carries the whole marbles in that hole and continues the same exercise. But as the marbles are dropped round in all the twelve holes, each player is watchful to see if any of his six holes contains four marbles and these he removes as having won them.

The important rules are:

(1) Players alternate when a player's last marble drops into an empty hole.

(2) Only one marble is dropped into one hole at a time.

(3) Irrespective of who is playing, a player who at any one time during the game has four seeds in any of his holes wins the four seeds.

When the marbles are too few to go round, they are divided equally among the players. The player with the greatest number of

marbles is the winner. The loser or the one with the least number of marbles is given the opportunity to start a second game.

14. OTOLERARA. In this game and in some others like it, the child who initiates it is usually the leader. This is a game for boys, and as many as twenty can play it in the street and at the back of the house. It is played mainly during the day, with the only implement being an uprooted grass or shrub which is used to hit a person.

The leader becomes the first "It," and holding the implement asks, "Who took my grass?" to which all others will respond that "I did!". The leader then chases the others and if he succeeds in hitting anyone, that person becomes the new "It." The game continues. When the "It" chases any particular individual, others stop to watch and enjoy the fun.

In order to put a stop to the chasing and also the game, the leader puts some sand on his chest and shouts that he is no more a member of the group. This is echoed by the rest and so ends the game.

15. ABOKI. Of all the guessing games played in the State, Aboki is one of the most difficult. Although boys and girls play it, it tends to attract boys more than girls. It is played both indoors and outdoors. A large square drawn on the ground for the game is shown on Figure 12. The small circles (twelve in number) are numbered as well as being marked with diagonal lines. Each of the double diagonal lines has a name - "Gidigidi" and "Obi." A seed or pebble is put in each of the twelve small circles. The central large circle is used to store the seeds during the play.

The guesser is allowed only one guess at a time. Although two groups or teams are selected for the game, only a member from each team can take active part at a time. Other members are not expected to help their teammates but must wait for their turn.

Each group elects one person to start the game. One decides to do the guessing and the other points to the circles and lines. The guesser turns his back to the large square. The one who points says "Aboki" and the guesser replies, "Take that seed to the centre circle." The pointer points to circle number one and asks, "Is it this?" to which the guesser replies, "Yes." The seed is then removed to the centre circle. The pointer repeats "Aboki." The guesser replies, "Take that seed to the centre circle." The pointer pointing to circle number one asks, "Is it this?" The guesser if he knows the game, answers "No" because the seed had been removed. The pointer then points to circle number two to which the guesser says "Yes" and the seed is removed to the centre circle. The same process is repeated for circle number three to which two "No" answers are expected (for circles number one and number two) before "Yes" for circle number three, that is "No," "No," "Yes." The circles and the diagonal lines are treated the same except that when the pointer touches the line number four, the guesser is expected to say "Gidigidi." So if the pointer, for example, points to circle number seven, the right answer expected is "No," "No," "No," "Gidigidi," "Obi," "No," and "Yes." (Each of the answers represents the previous circles, the diagonal lines and the seventh circle.)

If at any point, the guesser fails to say the right answer, he exchanges place with the pointer. The person who has the greatest number of seeds in the centre circle is the winner. Other members of the group who have been watching with keen interest are then given a chance to take part. It could be an individual or team victory.

16. AKHUE. There appears to be as many versions of this marble game as there are ethnic groups in the State. But one common feature is that it is a game enjoyed by both boys and adults. A simple court for the game (shown in Figure 13), which is drawn by foot on the ground, is placed in any open space either at the front or back of the house. It is never played at night because the special marbles used for the game, which grow wild in farm places, are dark coloured.

The game is played by two or four players. Each team undertakes to "plant" the marbles on its own half of the court. The "King" marble is planted at the centre as shown in the diagram. One marble is left to start the game, which is commenced by a member who spins his last remaining marble toward the opponent's court in an attempt to dislodge as many marbles as possible. The dislodged marbles are used by members of the opposing team in return. The two teams alternate and the team that first succeeds in dislodging all the opponent's marbles is the winner.

There are few rules in the game:

(1) To make a throw valid, a marble must spin.

(2) If, by mistake, a player knocks or dislodges his own marble it should be to the credit of the opponents and should not be replanted.

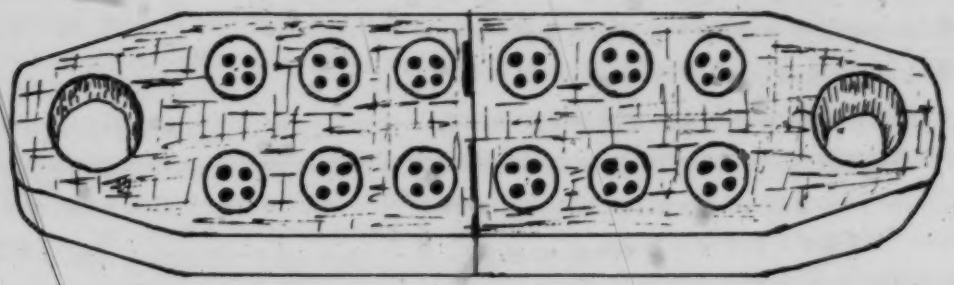

Figure 11. Eko or Ayo.

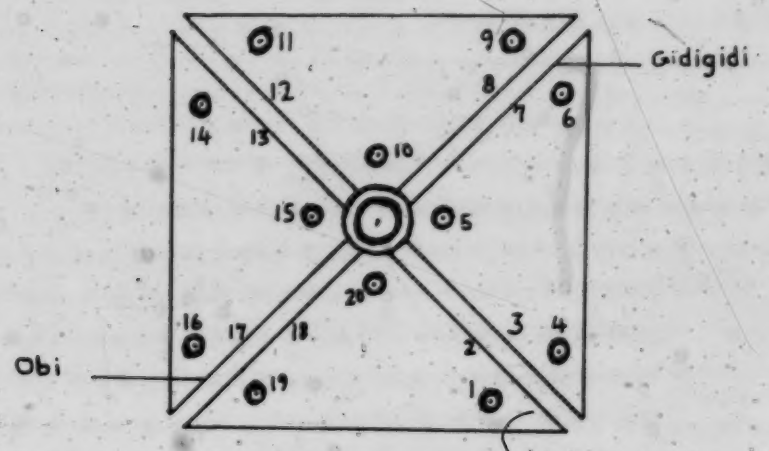

Figure 12. Aboki.

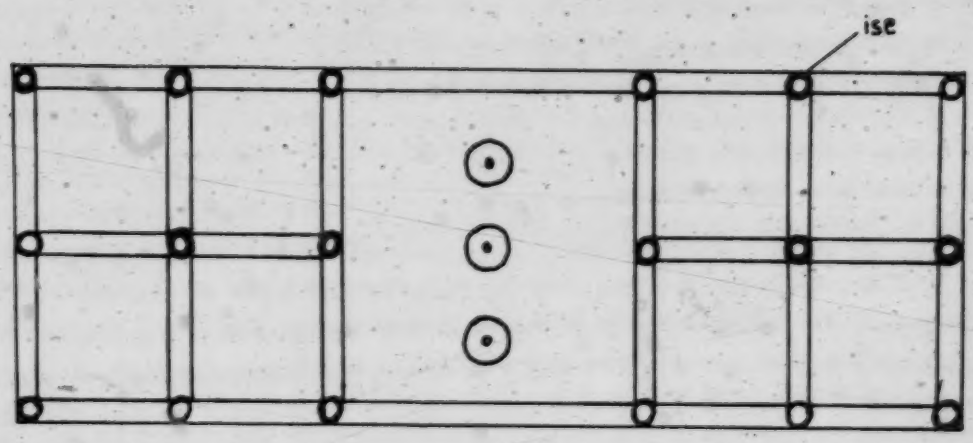

Figure 13. Akhue or Ise.

(3) Any player who dislodges the "Ovie" (King) is not allowed to show his teeth until he is able to dislodge another marble. If his teeth are shown, the "King" is replanted. (The showing of teeth is a form of ridicule; and the "King" is above ridicule.)

(4) There shall be an equal number of marbles in the two courts at the start of the game.

(5) A player can dislodge as many marbles as possible during one throw.

17. FIEGE. Fiege is a type of Tug-of-War contest. Historically, a cow was strangled to death by two contesting villages in honor of the god of war. Each village elected able-bodied men who would undergo a series of preparations for the contest. The training period lasted for three lunar months. Part of the preparations involved rituals with the local priests.

At the appointed date and place, a big cow was presented by the elders of the two contesting villages. The cow was held at each end by only five men from each village. While the cow was being strangled to death, other members sang war songs.

Today, instead of a cow, children use any strong twine or rope for this contest. There is a line of demarcation and if one team succeeds in pulling the first member of the opposing team beyond this line, they are the winners. Some members of the two groups stand by to cheer their team. Where a rope is not available, children form a chain by holding to each others waist. The contest can be seen in Figure 14. Adults also participate.

18. EDA. This is a very old target shooting play activity. It is played mainly by boys and young adults (aged five to twenty) at the back of houses. The two implements used are illustrated in Figures 15 & 16. The "Eda" is made of soft materials from banana and plantain trunks. The "Edada" is a carved pointed stick.

Participants, each with his own "Edada," form a wide circle with one person at the centre. As the person at the centre swings the "Eda" round above his waist height, each person attempts to hit it with the "Edada" which sticks to it. There are few rules to be observed in this game.

(1) To win a point, a player must first strike the whirling "Eda" with his "Edada," and then remove it after one complete revolution.

(2) But if someone else hits the "Eda" before one complete revolution, the point is lost.

(3) Five points are required for a winner to leave the circle.

(4) The last person in the circle is subjected to all kinds of humiliating treatment, and could be thrown into a nearby bush.

19. UDODO. A game similar to Eda is that of Udodo in that both require a high level of hand-eye coordination, and are played predominantly by boys and young adults, and are popular all the year round. Unlike Eda which is played in the back of the houses, Udodo is a street game. A spinner or top-like implement is created by carving a piece of wood into a conical shape (see Figure 17), an "Ugbuda" or whip is constructed from a thread-like fibre of one of the local shrubs, and is tied to the end of a short stick (see Figure 18).

Figure 14. Fiege.

Figure 19. Imiyen.

Figure 20. Ukpemiyengben.

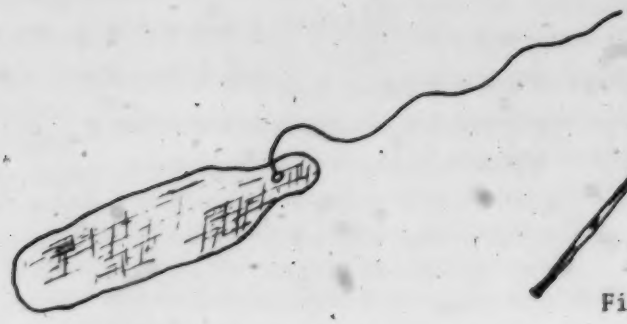

Figure 15. Eda.

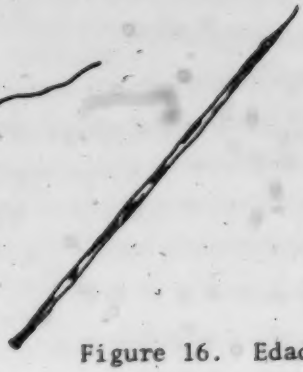

Figure 16. Edada.

Figure 17. Udodo or Agbe.

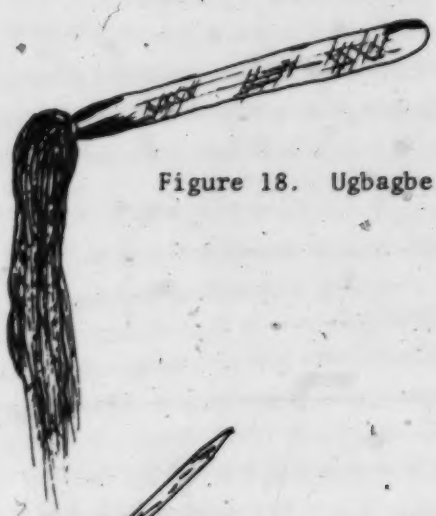

Figure 18. Ugbagbe.

Figure 21. Etekun

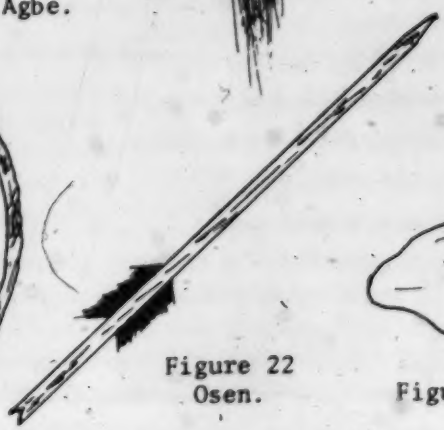

Figure 22
Osen.

Figure 23. Eko.

The first player sets the "Udodo" spinning then whips it with the "Ugbuda" for a distance. The player then runs to whip the "Udodo" while it is still spinning for another distance. Two or more players could have a race with their "Udodo."

The first player to whip his "Udodo" (still spinning) to a given destination is the winner. A competitor whose "Udodo" stopped spinning during the race withdraws.

A reasonably high level of skill is required to play this game, and the younger children often have difficulty in setting the "Udodo" into a spin with their hands. As a consequence, they often plant it in the sand before whipping it into motion.

A variation of this game is for two players to compete to see who can keep his "Udodo" spinning for the longest time with a single whip. Eskimo children in the Canadian arctic have been known to play a similar game (Glassford, 1970:198).

20. UKEGBO. Both boys and girls play this hide and seek game. As many children as are able to get together can play the game.

The players form a single line and begin to sing this song:

Amo re siusi
Oro Siusi
Owo ro ni ni re ye
Owo ro se re ye
Obru djo Khore.

Meaning: "Oh come and let us make a circle. Anyone who fails to do this will have his mother's and father's legs cut."

As no child wants his parents legs to be cut, all make a circle with their foot on the ground.[5]

One player is called "Egbo" (Ram) and he is the first "It." All other players then go to hide. The "Egbo" announces that he is ready to come out, and those in hiding reply "No." When there is no further reply to his statement, the "Egbo" tries to catch or tag one of the players as they run back to their circles for safety. Anyone caught is the new "It" (Egbo). Any Agbo "It" who fails to tag anyone is called "Ukegbo" and is carried into a nearby bush.

OWAN

1. UKPISAVBIOGHO. This is a popular marble game played by men, women and children of Owan and is similar, in many respects to the European game of "Jacks." Seven marbles are used, and a sandy ground is best suited for the game. People sit in a circular form to take their turn anti-clockwise. There are several stages in the game and failure at any of the stages means a turn for the next person.

There are two different ways to start the game.

(a) The player spreads the seven marbles on the ground and picks one to begin or

(b) Holding the whole seven marbles, the player begins by throwing one of them up and dropping the other six before he catches

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[5]A common way in which children designate their individual area or space is by drawing a circle or ring by using one leg as the pivot point of a compass.

the one tossed up.

One of these two is introductory to each of the other subsequent stages.

In the second stage, the player would then toss one marble up, pick one of those on the ground before catching the one tossed up. This process is repeated for each of the six marbles on the ground.

The third stage is similar to the second stage, but at this time the player picks two marbles at a time. This is repeated three times for the six marbles on the ground.

The fourth stage is also a repetition of the procedures in the second stage except that the player at this time picks three marbles at a time. This is repeated twice for the six marbles on the ground.

In the fifth stage, the player tosses one marble up while he attempts to arrange the six marbles in two groups of two and four before catching the one tossed up. The one marble tossed up can be repeated several times without penalty in order to arrange the six marbles. Once the arrangement has been created, the single marble is again tossed and the player attempts to capture the two marbles from the ground. If he succeeds then a second toss is made and he attempts to seize the four marbles before catching the tossed marble.

As in the other stages, the sixth stage begins with one marble tossed up while the player attempts to arrange the six

marbles in two groups of one and five before catching the tossed marble. The toss is repeated to pick first the one marble tossed up and next the five marbles.

In the seventh stage, the player tosses one marble up repeatedly while he tries to place one marble over the other five on the ground. If he succeeds, then one marble is tossed up and the whole pyramid of marbles on the ground is picked up. There is no time limit and no penalty in setting the pyramid of marbles.

The eight is the last and final stage. The player tosses one marble up and picks two marbles one at a time. With three marbles in the hand and four on the ground, the player tosses the three marbles up, picks up the four on the ground and attempts to catch one of the three tossed up marbles. This leaves two marbles to drop.

It should be noted that only one hand is used for the game. There is no assistance from the second hand or from fellow contestants. Failure to go through the whole series of stages means that the contestant has to begin afresh when it is his or her turn again. In some parts of the State, a player is allowed to continue the game from the last stage where failure occurred. The many steps to be gone through limits the number of players to five or six. Any player who successfully goes through all the steps wins and watches others continue the game. There are no prizes or reward.

2. UREGHE. This game is the same as the one above but with one major difference. In picking any one marble or a number of marbles, other marbles should never be touched by hand. Such a violation causes the contestant to lose his or her turn.

3 IMIYEN. An exclusive game for girls played at any time

in any available space. It is the most common of all the games and yet quite complicated. There are three stages to the game. It is not compulsory that all the stages be gone through each time. About four to ten girls stand in a semi-circle to begin the game (see Figure 19).

In the first stage, one girl at a time comes out to try to "outstep" her mates to win seven points. She faces each member and to a rhythm both lift one leg simultaneously. If, for example, the contestant lifts her right leg and the opposing member lifts her own right leg, (which, while face to face, will be alternate legs), then the contestant wins a point and moves to another member. But if opposing legs are lifted twice, a third lift helps to decide the point. In a case of a dead-lock where both girls lift the same opposing legs thrice it is a loss of points to the contestant who then exchanges places with that particular player. The new contestant repeats the same process above.

If, in a round, a contestant wins seven points, then she leaves the competition and waits with other winners to see the last in the group.

In the second stage, the last in the group sits on the ground with one leg stretched out. Each of the other girls hops back and forth over the outstretched leg seven times. If, while hopping, the outstretched leg is touched, the girl hopping exchanges places with the girl sitting. If the hopping exercise is successfully done by all the members, the third and last stage is that each girl places a finger on the head of the one sitting and tries to walk round her without touching her. If the girl walking round touches any part of the body

of the girl sitting, the penalty is that she replaces the girl sitting. Quite often this stage is gone through without a defaulter where the sizes of the girls are uniform. Short girls find difficulty in getting through this stage when a tall girl is sitting with one outstretched leg. No one is allowed to step over the outstretched leg.

4. ESEO YE. Most of the participants in this play-form are, by tradition, "betrothals" to young men. This is not a game but an agility exercise for young ladies between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Boys and young men are usually around to watch. The main interest of the boys is to ridicule any girl who falls during the exercise.

About seven to fifteen girls form a semi-circle. One girl runs forward in front of the other girls to a distance of about fifteen to twenty feet, and runs back with her back to her mates who hold her by the arms to throw her forward. To help her balance after the throw, the girl stretches one leg as other members lower her before the throw. The exercise is a test of strength for both the contestant and those who do the throwing. Members take their turn. The song that goes with this exercise is,

Ese O ye Ese O ye

ye - ye - ye!

5. UKPEMIYENGBEN. This is another agility game for girls. The girls form a circle kneeling with one leg outstretched. All the outstretched legs are inter-locked and members hold hands to help them get up, each standing on one leg (see Figure 20). When they all stand, they clap and sing thus:

Okpemiyengben ..... iyengben

Okpemiyengben ..... iyengben

Onofiodon ..... iyengben

Erai Ukpekhokho ..... iyengben

Iyoni Ukpikanren ..... iyengben

Ukpemiyengben ..... iyengben

All that the song is about is that any weak person who drops her leg will have her parents nick-named as one local sour fruit. Once one member drops her leg, it is always difficult for the rest to keep together. They often start all over again. This game is played primarily during the moonlit period.

6. OVBIEKIRIN TOLOGHERE RE. Girls between the ages of eight and fourteen enjoy this game during moonlight. In a society where virginity in women is of a high social importance, boys are always around during this game to ridicule those among the girls whom they think have had sexual relations.

About ten to twenty girls sit in two rows facing each other and legs interlocked. Each person holds onto the partner's toes. A piece of cloth is tied into a pad and this is dropped on the legs. This pad is tossed up and down with the legs. If the pad rests on any of the girl's laps, the girl is suspected to have had sexual relations. The song which is chanted is "Ovbiekirin ..... tologhere re" which means that the pad should point out which girl has had sex. No girl wants to be so labelled even though it is all fun (see Figure 9).

7. OGOLEMERE GOLOKO. Boys and girls take part in this activity.

Each boy or girl ties a piece of cloth around the waist leaving a little behind to be held. A long line was formed by holding onto the cloth tied round the waist of the person in front. The smartest and most fearless boy or girl was usually at the front of the line. One group would challenge the other by trying to break through the line. This may result in a fight. After forming the long line by holding onto each others cloth, the group would sing this song:

Ogelemere ..... goloko

Ohiokpare ..... lojedo.

This is repeated several times. The wording of the song is boastful - indicating the strength and supremacy of the group.

8. GOGO IYO E - E -E. This is mainly played by girls about the ages of ten and upwards. They form a circle and hold each others arms. The whole circle moves with short steps first to the right, then to the left. While they move, the whole group sings together the following song:

Go Go Iyo E - E!

Mama Iye E - E!

Oreme ria sobo vbudu kheme

Go Go Iyo E - E!

Once again these words are boastful and all they mean is that they, the singers, are equal to any challenge from their age-mates. It is not unusual that after such a song that children from other quarters in the same village would be attracted to a fight. It appears a preliminary ritual performed by children which is designed to create

a conflict environment that other children cannnot readily ignore.

9. OBEGURE LOFIHUE. A group of ten to fifteen girls take part in this type of game. One of them is designated "Obegure," that is, an old woman with sores, haggard and nasalized in speech. She walks with the help of a stick. She has a sick daughter.

All the other girls sit in a row with outstretched legs. The sick daughter is put on the laps of these girls and is rolled up and down the legs as they sing this song:

Obegure lofihue E! E! Obegure O E!

Obegure lofihue E! E! Obegure O E!

Ukpivin O degbomovbihue E! E! Obegure O E!

Ukpivin O degbomovbihue E! E! Obegure O E!

Omo iremi O denode E! E! Obegure O E!

Omo leghea leghe leghe E! E! Obegure O E!

The song is to tell the old mother that the daughter had been starving and was later stoned.

The old woman comes to enquire about the condition of the daughter. Before her arrival, the sick daughter has been hidden and the girls have substituted a piece of cloth. When the old woman comes back a second time, she is told by the girls that the sick daughter is dead. This sad news breaks the old woman's heart and she chases all the girls to demand her daughter. Of course all the girls flee leaving the poor old woman alone.

10. SILAGBADAGBA. This is an activity where physical strength is tested. Boys and girls play separately. A circle is formed with all

players kneeling. They grasp hold of each others arms. As they sing the following song, they rock to the right and then left, and at the last word, "Awe," they pull each other to see who would either fall or touch the ground with the hand or any part of the arm. Anyone who does this is eliminated. The last person in the group is the winner. The song, the origin of which is unkown, is as follows:

Silagbadagba

Silogbodogbo

Daunsia, Awe! (This is repeated)

11. AGBE. This is a game primarily for boys, although on occasion men sometimes participate. A special wood (Uguomigho) is carved in a conical form as shown in Figure 17. The object thus formed is known as "Agbe." From special shrubs (Ebisomon) a material shown in the picture is made. The purpose of this is to whip the carved wood. This implement is known as an "Ugbagbe." The open streets are ideal for this game. In most respects this game is identical to the Urhobo game of Ododo.

The conical carved wood is either planted on the ground before it is whipped or the hand is used to spin it before whipping. The whipping is done to spin the "Agbe." When it is whipped to travel a distance, the carved wood should continue spinning on the spot, and from there it is whipped again for another distance. A poorly prepared "Ugbabe" will not make the "Agbe" spin.

Four, five or more boys usually line up to make a race with their "Agbe." The following points help the judges to decide the winner.

(a) How many times a player re-starts his "Agbe" during the

race.

(b) The first to get to the finishing point with the "Agbe" still spinning on the ground is declared the winner.

The game of Agbe is one of technical skill and it is not easily mastered.

12. JEDO JEDO. A stick about six inches to one foot long is planted on a conical mound of ground and two to four boys sit around the perimeter of the mound. Each person in turn digs the sand with both hands as he sings the following song.

Jedo Jedo

Alapame saigidigbi ya.

Meaning: Each player boasts of his strength. The song ends with the back of the digger's hands being knocked gently on the ground.

The digging out of the sand continues from all the sides of the mound or hip of sand until the planted stick falls to one side. Whichever side the stick falls, the person sitting there will place his palm on the ground for each other member to knock with a fist once. If the knocks are too hard, they could result in a fight between the players.

13. EKO. An interesting game which is played predominantly by boys is a form of archery know as Eko. The implements consist of a bow made from a shrub called "Asimighone," the "Ukan" or cane (see Figure 21), arrows constructed of palm leaf ribs and fletched with feathers taken from fowls (see Figure 22), and a target which is a type of fruit known as the "Eko" (see Figure 23). The "Eko" is not

widely available, and as a consequence the boys frequently substitute the paw paw which is also a fruit which grows in the gardens of the villages or in the areas behind the houses.

Two or more players, each of whom possesses a bow and a number of arrows, participate in the game. The players assume a position behind the "Eko" or target which is then thrown or kicked forward. All players then attempt to hit the target with their arrows as it rolls across the ground. The first to do so marks the spot upon which he was standing when he made the successful shot and the other members of the group are challenged to duplicate his performance. Any member of the group who fails in his attempt to hit the target from the marked spot must surrender one of his arrows to the champion. After each member has attempted the feat, the game continues as per the original pattern.

In order that a hit be considered valid it must strike the "Eko" or target (which is about the size and shape of a Canadian football) in the middle portion. A hit on the head (Ukhani) or the tail (Uhi) are not considered valid target areas.

Since the game is of a zero sum form it is not uncommon for players to return home with only a few arrows or none at all. Older brothers and fathers help the younger boys in the construction of arrows and bows which, traditionally, were of considerable importance in the life-style of the people. Due to the obvious dangers of the activity the boys are required to play in the area behind the houses.

14. UKPODOVBIQJEIKA. This is another version of Ise in

Owan and Akhue in Benin. It is a game for boys and men. Instead of the usual three vertical and horizontal lines, there is only one straight line. Each team plants the marbles on each half of the line.

Unlike the other versions, both teams start at both ends continuously to aim at dislodging each others marbles. As soon as one team succeeds in dislodging any of the opponents marbles, members of the team would use hands to protect further attacks from the opponents. But as soon as the opponent succeeds in breaking the blockade by dislodging one or more marbles, the game continues with each side aiming at each other's marbles. The winner is the team that succeeds in first dislodging all the marbles of the other team.

The literal meaning of the title of the game is that the road that leads to the royal house is always busy with people.

15. UKPOGHOGHO. A circle game which is significant from the standpoint of group solidarity or cohesiveness is that called Ukpoghogho. It is a circle game played by both boys and girls jointly or separately who link hands and form a ring around a pre-established circle. The size of the circle determines the number of players. One individual remains at the centre of the circle (see Figure 24).

The player attempts to break out of the circle and back without being touched by any of those outside the circle. Such a feat produces a point for the successful player, and should a player gather seven points then he or she is declared champion. If, while running out of or into the circle, the player is touched, the toucher

and touched exchange places and the game continues.

The score of the players is contained in the song which is chanted by the other players as follows:

Ukpoghogho	Ogho	
Omorokpa	Okpa	- 1
Omoreva	Eva	- 2
Omoreha	Eha	- 3
Omorene	Ene	- 4
Omorihenren	Ihenren	- 5
Omoreehan	Ehan	- 6
Omorihiron	Ihiron	- 7

The song is mainly counting the points.

16. OTURKAR. Oturkar is a game peculiar to the northern sector of Owan Division. As many as twenty or more boys and girls form in two groups, each under a leader chosen by the children. Each group has a collection of cobs of corn (Uhbokar) which the leader throws one at a time away to be picked by members of the groups. Every player strives to gain the cob. The first member of each group to bring back a cob to the leader stays with him or her. This exercise is repeated until all but one player are with the leader. This last child is made to kneel down with arms stretched sideways. Every other child runs around the one kneeling. The child (the same one) sits down with one leg stretched. Every member of the group jumps over the leg. If any jumper touches the child sitting, they will exchange places.

At the end of the jumping exercise, all the players close

their eyes for dismissal. The leader then says "Pepepe e! Urieh!" which literally means "dismissed!". The game can be repeated. It is a game played during the daytime.

17. IWEOJE. This exclusive game for girls is started with a song:

Iwoeje Iwoeje O Iwoeje
Bai rhue vbisevba Iwoeje
Laoba laomuru Iwoeje.

Meaning: "Mrs. X, what is your morning salutation?"

After this song has been repeated several times, apparently to attract or invite other girls, those who would like to participate form two groups. The two groups form two lines some ten to fifteen yards apart facing each other. The arrangement is similar to that of the "Breathless" game.

Each member hops from her line to the other group and back to her place. The two groups take turns alternately. As the hopping exercise is on, the two groups sing a song to warn the "hopper" that it is disastrous for her not to be able to complete her round. Any girl whose trailing leg touches the ground is disqualified and she is not allowed to join the group. The age of the participants decides the distance between the groups. There should be seven players in each group but this is not strictly observed. Players who are successful cheer themselves with this song:

Ilegboye nipeken ihiron, Aroye
Ukha roe sotore ogbe ukpere O, Aroye.

Meaning: The player is warned that failure to complete the seven rounds would remove a year from her age. This is significant in a society where senority is respected.

18. OLEMINI O JEKURE. This is the only water play-form recorded in Owan Division. Although there are a few rivers, they are rough and some are fast flowing.

Most frequently this is an activity played by girls. They travel to the part of the river which is chest-deep (non-swimmers), and hold hands in a circle. They sing a song and at the end of the song, they break hands and fall back. They all go under the water, and the person who remains under the longest is the winner. No leader or umpire is needed in that as each person emerges from the water, it is easy to know the last person to emerge. The exercise is repeated several times. Anyone who becomes tired is allowed to rest.

The song: Olemini O Jekure

Erha je je je, Jekure

Iyon je je je, Jekure

Ewe tobo we O Jekure.

In this song, reference is made to the female private part which should be carefully taken care of.

19. OVBIOVBIME. Ovbiovbime is a hide and seek game played by boys and girls. A group of children persuade someone a little older than they are to play the role of a leader. The leader is provided a seat. One girl or boy is blindfolded by the leader and all other children go to hide. This blindfolded child ("It") calls on those in

hiding and they all answer. They are advised by the child ("It") to make sure they are in proper hiding places. Then the seeker asks if he or she could come to find them out. If the answer is "yes" then the child ("It") attempts to ferret out their mates who are in hiding, and they all run out to where the leader is. Anyone caught becomes the next person to be blindfolded ("It"). But if the child ("It") fails to tag or catch anyone, he or she is carried by all the mates to where all refuse in the village is dumped. It is never a pleasant experience.

20. ISE. One of the most popular recreative games among the adult males in Owan is a voluntary participation in this children's game. Children play this game any time of the day. The adults join in the evenings when they are back from their farms.

The court is very similar to the one shown in Figure 13. The size depends on the number of marbles available. These marbles are planted as shown, and those at the back row of the court are of special designation. The court is made with the foot, and the lines and intersections are very carefully drawn. The seeds are divided equally among the two groups who are to play the game. The most senior of one of the groups starts the game with one marble which has been left out for this purpose. The player spins the marble one-handed or two to the other court in an attempt to displace as many marbles as he can. Any marble displaced, together with the original one are used by the opposing team for a return attack. The marbles displaced DO NOT become the property of the team displacing them. Every member of the team

takes part as the marbles are usually shared as the game progresses. The team that succeeds first in knocking all the marbles of the other team is the winner.

The following rules govern this game in this part of the State.

(1) After one marble has been displaced, it is legitimate for a player to prevent either by foot or hand, a marble from displacing or knocking down more than one marble in his court.

(2) It is legitimate to displace more than one marble with one marble service.

(3) For a service to be valid, the player must be behind the line at the back of the court designated "Uhonmoki."

(4) A service marble spinning must be allowed to be "dead" before it is picked by the opponent.

(5) If a service marble lands in the neutral place at the centre of the court, the first person from either side to pick it up has it.

(6) A game must always be started by the oldest member of the team. He can delegate this right to any member of the team that he considers as adept in the game.

(7) If a team, by mistake, knocks his own marbles while serving, the marbles are replanted.

It is regarded as humiliating for a service marble that has knocked or displaced a marble in any part of the court to displace, in addition, any of the special marbles that are planted in strategic

places. Every effort is made to prevent this. These special marbles are expected to be the last to be displaced. It is an extraordinary achievement for a player to displace a special marble. Yet it must be done in every game in order for a team to be declared a winner.

ISHAN

Ishan people are reputed for their very excellent acrobatic displays. Their popular "Igbaboleimi" dance features prominently in many Nigerian art festivals.

Although research studies have not been undertaken as to what factors are responsible for the popularity of calisthenics in Ishan, many people have attributed it to the presence of the red loose sand which is prevalent in the villages. Acute water shortage (which is now being solved with pipe-borne water) had made children trek long distances to the rivers. These daily long treks on sandy paths offered opportunities for gymnastic practices.

Some Ishan games are described below.

1. UPE - E - E - E - O. This is a breathholding game for girls, primarily between the ages of nine and twelve. There are two groups. Each group stands in a single row some distance from the other group and facing each other.

One girl at a time says "Upe-e-e," continuously saying the last "e" as she runs from her group to the other, runs round them and back home. If, while doing this, she breaks what she is saying, then she has to join the other group. But if she succeeds in going to the

other group and back without breaking the sound, then her group welcomes her with "Iyare" - meaning "I have arrived." (Figure 10).

The two teams alternate in contesting, and the team that has the greater number, when every member has had her own turn, wins the game.

A participant could be teased as she says the long-breath song with jests, funny words or humorous antics by the opposing team members.

It is a game which is played predominantly during the moon-lit period.

In a second version of this game, the players organize themselves in a manner similar to Upe-e-e-e-o, but the game has the following unique characteristics:

1. There is a line of demarcation between the two teams, and a court for each team. A competitor is all right if she is able to get to her court without having to take a second breath or without breaking the long sound.

2. The contestant touches a player in the other group, and the person so designated must be the next to compete.

3. Those who fail to complete their trips go to sit in their opponent's court and no longer take part.

The game is repeated after all have had their turn.

2. OGBE. Among the popular games of the Ishan children is a hunter-hunted activity named Ogbe. Both sexes can play, and the game is started when the leader (designated due to age) selects a

player who will be the power figure "It." The child so chosen must close his eyes while the others run to hide. Once this is accomplished the leader releases the central player who then attempts to "capture" as many of his mates as he can. Those caught must join the "It" in the hunt and capture process of the other players. When everyone has been caught the game is started again. The game is a popular activity during the moonlit period.

As the children run, they sing:

Ogbie lo lo lo lo lo lo

Ogbie lo lo lo lo lo lo

Onu kare nwa mu lo lo lo.

Meaning: "Catch anyone you can get." A person can only be caught once in a game.

3. AYAN NIHIEN. A favorite group game played jointly by both boys and girls is Ayan Nihien. It is basically a guessing game wherein the names of fruits and seeds are given to the players, and in this way the children learn their names for future use. Two leaders, most frequently the oldest players in the group, divide the children into two groups (by selection) and each group sits in a row opposite the other group, and separated by some twenty yards.

In one version, the leader gives the name of the fruit or a seed to each player in his group, being careful to keep the information a secret from the opposing side. In a second version, members select their own name and secretly inform their leader.

The leader of group "A" goes to group "B" and blindfolds a

member of that group. He then calls on one of his team members by his secret name and this player crosses the intervening space, touches the "blind" person on the toe and races back home. The "blind" player's eyes are unbound and he or she goes to the other group and identifies the player who made the touch. If the player succeeds in guessing the toucher, that player must cross over and join the opposing side. The successful side rejoices in the gaining of a new member by chanting the following song:

Iyemhan gbo bie

Oyo oyo yo yo Oyo yo.

Meaning: "A mother has given birth to a child. Let us all rejoice." The "new" member takes on a new name and the game continues. If, however, the guess is wrong then that member must remain in the opposing camp, who, in turn, rejoice by singing the above song. After playing the game for a period of time the group with the larger number of players is considered to be the winner. No sanctions are instituted against the defeated group.

4. UKOKIZAGHENLEN. Girls usually borrow their mother's head-tie or the native belt for packing babies, and they use this for making a pad which is a primary implement for this game. The nature of the game is such that it is mostly played during moonlight, and a sandy surface is most suited as a play area.

As many as twenty girls can play together in a group. They all sit opposite each other with legs stretched between the legs of the partner. Each person holds the others toes. They sit so close

that the pad, which is the game implement, cannot fall between the legs. The pad is dropped at the centre of the line on top of the legs, and with vigorous movement of the legs up and down the pad is tossed from one person to another.

The pad should not rest on anybody's legs or drop at any person's side. If this occurs, such a person is nicknamed a "thief." In one version, the person so nicknamed will run and be chased by the other children for a while before the game is repeated.

In another version, it is sufficient to ridicule the "thief" and continue the game.

As with so many games of this area, a song is an integral part of the activity. This is the song that goes with this game:

Ukokizaghenlen ..... za ghen

Ukokizaghenlen ..... za ghen

Okhi nabhobo me de ..... za ghen

Oboyi ada de o ..... za ghen.

A literal translation is "this piece of cloth will not fall from me but only from a thief."

5. OBHORUGBOMEN. This chasing game is played separately by boys and girls. One of the children is the "farmer" and the others are the "thieves." The "thieves" stay some few yards away from the "farmer."

When the "farmer" asks "who is in my farm?" the "thieves" reply that they are there. The "farmer" requests that they should wait for him. But as the "farmer" approaches the "thieves," they all take to their

heels. If the farmer manages to catch some of the thieves, those caught become farmers. The game continues until all the thieves are caught and become farmers.

6. ERAN TOVBATO RUNE. Boys and girls mix well together to enjoy the fun of this game. They form a large circle with one child standing behind a partner. The leader stands at the centre and chants: "Eran tovbato" (there is fire on the mountain), and the children answer "Rune! Rune!" (run), as those standing behind their mates run round the circle anti-clockwise. When the leader says "Eran wele" (the fire is out), those running pair up with their partners. The last to pair up come to sit in the centre of the circle. The pairs standing exchange places, allowing the other person to have his or her turn, and the game continues.

No one is allowed to run either clock-wise or across the circle to his or her partner when the leader says "the fire is out." More fun is added to the game if pairs are told to hang on the shoulders of their partners both at the start and the end of the running

It is significant to note that many people live in grass houses. Any outbreak of fire usually affects a considerable number of people. This game appears to take the form of a fire drill.

7. KALA. The Kala guessing game is very similar to the "Aboki" played in Urhobo. (The differences can be seen in Figure 25.) Boys and girls can play this game together and four people are required at a time. One player is designated to do the guessing and the other three do the pointing and questioning. The pattern noted in the diagram

can be drawn on the ground outside or on the floor inside with white chalk or charcoal. Each circle in the pattern has a seed. The starting point is marked "x." The lines at right angles are named "Agadaga." The player who does the guessing sits with his back to the pattern. He is allowed only one guess at a time.

One of the other three players touches the starting point and says "Kala," to which the guesser replies "Agadaga." The pointer next points to the first circle and the guesser replies "ise" (seed). The seed is removed from that circle. The pointer points to the empty circle and the guesser is expected to reply "ihoi" (empty). The pointer then points to circle number two to which the guesser replies "ise" (seed). The seed is removed. The pointer then points to circle number one, number two and number three, to which the guesser is expected to reply "ihoi," "ihoi," "ise." Each time the pointer points to the lines at right angles, the pointer replies "Agadaga." The pointer is expected to progress systematically without jumping any line or circle. If at any time the guesser fails to say the right answer, he exchanges place with the pointer. The winner is the one who gives all correct guesses. The pointers take turns to point.

8. ARE UVIN FI (Coconut fruit). This is a game for boys and girls, and is played during moonlight. The children organize themselves into two groups, each with a leader who does the throwing of the only implement used which is a coconut fruit. The two groups stand a little far away from the two leaders. One of the leaders throws the coconut fruit to the two groups who struggle to catch it.

Anyone who catches the coconut fruit scores a point for his or her group, and at the same time wins an opportunity for his or her leader to make a throw.

The few rules for the game are:

(1) The thrower is not allowed to throw the coconut fruit to an individual.

(2) The two groups must stay together.

(3) No one is allowed to struggle with whoever is in possession of the coconut fruit.

(4) The group that has the greater number of points wins.

9. UGBOLO GBE EVA. This is a favorite game for girls, but younger boys between the ages of five and seven sometimes take part. Like most games it is more commonly played during moonlight than at other times.

The children all sit close with legs fully stretched forward. One child comes up to count the feet of his or her mates. As he or she counts, the following is sung:

Ugbolo gbe eva

Teke teneghe

Tegule nokpa

Onusen nologho

Onode ya-a-a

Tamokpa kameva

Nugba akele akele

Gbobodo nomon idere

Odele Owe O

Adumenke Owe O.

During the counting and singing, whichever foot is counted or touched during the lines "Onode ya-a-a" and "Adumenke Owe O," the person draws up the knee of the limb touched. The remaining legs are counted as above. Whoever is unfortunate enough to have to draw up both knees must leave the group, and the counting continues with the remaining children. The elimination goes on until every player save one is eliminated. With the last one leg, the counter counts one of his or her legs along to enable her to eliminate the last person. (This aspect of the game is similar, in many ways, to the European game of Enni-Menni-Minni-Moe.)

The children now form a single file, standing. Before each child sits, the counter enquires from the child her favorite dish to which each responds. The counter then gives words of caution about what a child should do with favorite dishes - "Do not steal."

One single child is left standing, and this is known as the mystical, the extraordinary person with seven heads, the "Ojogbolimhe."

The other children now beg the "Ojogbolimhe" not to kill them, and entreat him to kill someone with a big navel because such a big navel contains oil and eggs. The children put this into a song:

Yan bho yan bho yan
Egbemhen le
Yan bho yan bho yan
Azukhun Ua gbele
Yan bho yan bho yan
Abhili Abhili no

Yan bho yan bho yan
Ekenken Ekenlen no
Yan bho yan bho yan
Ojogbolimhen le
Yan bho yan bho yan.

The "Ojogbolimhe" is asked if he would still want to eat up the children. The offer is rejected and the children now stand. They try to ridicule and tickle "Ojogbolimhe" and if he laughs, all will laugh with him. But if he resists, he is praised by all the children. The game may be repeated.

10. ARHIU UKPON BHI IKEKE. This is a game for boys and girls. A piece of cloth is needed for the game. They all sit in a circle and one child runs round the circle behind his mates with the piece of cloth. As he or she runs, the child sings "Arhuikpon bhi ikeke yo yo" (meaning: "I have placed a piece of cloth behind someone.") and the other children answer with the chorus "yo yo yo." The cloth is quietly dropped on someone's back. If the person knows, he or she quickly picks it up and runs after the child who dropped it. This child who dropped the cloth runs to occupy the space left by the child chasing him or her. If the child who has the cloth behind him is unaware of the cloth, the child who dropped it comes to beat him up before giving him the cloth to continue the game. The beating is mildly severe.

No one is allowed to look back while sitting in the circle.

11. OLAGEDE OLAGEDE. Among the games of physical strength played by Ishan boys and girls is that which is called Olagede Olagede.

Players kneel in a circle and grasp the players to their left and right firmly on the arms. Having secured their grip, the players chant:

Olagede Olagede Olealuwhen

Aba ba ohehe khulete zagiah.

At the end of the chant the players attempt to pull one another in such a way as to make them fall from their kneeling position. Any player who falls is eliminated and must stand in the centre of the circle. The game continues until only one player remains. This person is declared the winner.

12. AKPAKPA KPAE RE. In this game, girls stand in pairs in a circle. Each girl, beginning from the leader, is expected to sing with her name thus: Iyamu "kpae re" to which others respond "kpae re." Any member who, out of inattention, breaks the rhythm of the song or hesitates in singing with her name is eliminated and goes to sit at the centre of the circle. The last to be eliminated is the winner.

13. EKIORUMI YE DOMI (Uromi Market). It is difficult to link the physical exercises involved in this game with the existence of one of the biggest markets in this part of the State. One possible interpretation is that for a trader to be able to buy the best food-stuffs or make a good sale in the local markets, it is important to be there early, and the earlier the better.

This is a game for girls during moonlight hours. The older girls usually help in the organization of the game, and only girls with beads on the waist can take part. There are different kinds of beads. Some are coral beads, and the most common ones are made out of coconut

shells. As early as the age of about five, girls start to wear beads on their waist. The number of beads on a girl's waist is an indication of the social status of the parents. Girls with one or two beads are from poor homes. In this game, girls who have no beads borrow some from their mates. Twelve wooden stools (most common seats) are used by each group.

Two teams of twelve girls in each group compete. The stools are lined up in two straight rows. A member of each group jumps over each of the stools. There is vigorous shake of the waist after every landing. This first pair is followed by other pairs until all have had their chance. The song that goes with this jumping exercise is:

Ykiorumi ye domi ye ha - e.

Meaning: "Is Uromi market still existing? Yes, of course."

At the second round, the song is:

Ekpakpa ye ribho, ye ha - e.

Meaning: "Can I still have corn to buy? Yes, of course."

At the third round, the beads which are normally worn on the waist by girls are pulled up to the chest for the jumps.

The only rule in the game is that knocking down any of the wooden stools is a fault against the competitor. The number of girls who fell during the competition and the number of stools knocked down help to decide on the winner.

14. IMUOMON RE EDE. The meaning of the title of this game is "I have brought a child to the river." This is a chasing game. Each player carries one other player on his back. (The custom among

the people is for women to carry their children on their backs tied with the traditional loin cloth.) There is one "It" to begin the game. Whoever the "It" touches, surrenders his child (the partner carried on the back). The fun of the game is in the difficulty of the players to run with someone on their backs. The last pair to be caught are the winners.

15. EKPEN KHA MUEN EWE. This game is very popular and is played any time of the year by both boys and girls between the ages of six and twelve. Any number of players between ten and thirty can play at a given time.

The children form a big circle by joining their hands. A child is at the centre who represents "Ewe" (goat), and another player stays outside the circle who represents "Ekpen" (leopard).

The "leopard" attempts to catch the "goat," and those in the circle do their best to prevent this. As the circle moves round, the children sing this song:

Ekpen Kha mue eye khi oje mu o

E! Jolemu.

Jolemu no mu so owa

E! Jolemu.

Meaning: "The leopard who likes to catch a goat should be allowed."

Sometimes the leopard succeeds in getting at the goat.

The game continues when other children take their turns in playing the "leopard" and the "goat."

The rules are simple. First, the "goat" stationed at the centre

of the circle must not run outside the circle when the "leopard" attempts to catch it. Second, a break of hands in the circle should not be used by the "leopard" for the catch. Such a catch is never a valid one.

16. AKHUE. This is one version of the marble game described earlier under the heading "Ise." Two players are involved. The marbles are divided equally and each person plants his marbles on his own side of the court. In the planting, pyramids of four marbles are made, that is, one marble is placed on the top of three marbles. Like other versions, one marble is left over to start the game.

The whole idea is to first scatter or break down the pyramids of marbles before attempting to knock each marble. Any marble that is knocked is added to the marbles to be used in throwing. Marbles that are thrown must spin towards their targets. The person who first succeeds in knocking all the marbles of his opponents is the winner. This game is popular among boys, and is frequently viewed in the open areas at the front of the houses.

17. OJEMELE (King of Monkeys). This game is for boys and girls. The children pair up holding each others upper arm face to face. These pairs form a line. The smallest or lightest of the children is helped to climb up to walk across the bridge formed by his or her mates. This child climbing is the "King of Monkeys." He supports himself by placing his hands on the heads of his mates. As the "King of Monkey" completes going over the first pair, they quickly move to extend the line. Thus a continuous climb is ensured the "King of Monkey."

Figure 24. Ukpoghogho.

Figure 26. Ojemele.

Figure 28. Okereke Okereke.

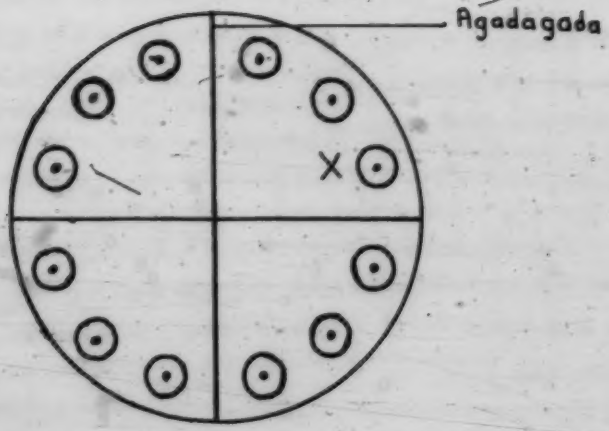

Figure 25. Kala.

Figure 27. Ikoto.

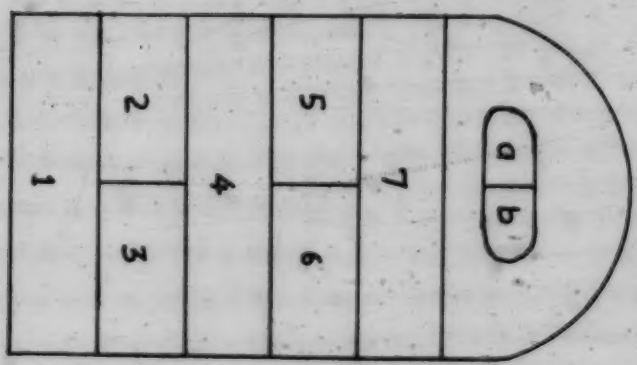

Figure 30. Suwe.

The children sing the following song in praise of the monkey:

Ojemele hele oran no ajie helen

Obhaki jie helen Uhelen obhebhe

Ojemele helen oran no ajie helen.

Meaning: "Thou King of Monkeys, climb the trees that pleases you. If any tree is difficult to climb, skip it and climb another."

The "King of Monkeys" can be played by one or two players at a time. Where the "King" slips, he is helped to continue the climb (see Figure 26).

BENIN

1. OLATORO: A popular mixed activity for boys and girls between the ages of seven and twelve is a seeking game entitled "Olatoro." It is most frequently played during moonlight hours and typically involves some ten to twenty players.

The children join hands and form a big circle. As they move around the circle, they sing a song. In this song, each participant's name is mentioned and he is requested to drop his dress in the centre of the circle. If a member has no dress on, he points a fist to the centre of the circle as a substitute for dress. The song goes like this:

Olatoro ..... Latoro

Olatoro ..... Latoro

Atoro ghi tore rhamwen vbo rerhimwin ..... Latoro

Atoro ghi tori yevben vbo re rhimwin ..... Latora

Olatoro ..... Latoro

Olatoro ..... Latoro

Ojo banukpon nu rie ya toro ..... Latoro.

When every member has dropped his or her dress, the children form two groups. One group collects all the dresses and goes into hiding while others lie face down. It is the duty of the group left behind to find out those in hiding in order to recover their dresses. Sometimes they are successful. But if the group is not successful in finding out those in hiding, an appeal in form of a song is made for them to come out.

Oyi no rhie vbun ukpon

Riu ukpon bben gun vben

Oyi no me se.

In this song, those who are in hiding are labelled thieves but with a difference -- they are beautiful and good thieves. (In this society, any thief caught is heavily punished.) They finally come out of hiding and each person takes back his or her dress. The game can be repeated.

In some parts of Benin, there are variations of this game. In one area, the circle which the children form while singing the song moves so swiftly that some players are unable to keep up. Any player who breaks the chain must leave the circle. The last two in the circle collect all the deposited dresses and are permitted to hide with them. In one other version, children who have no clothes on are requested each to touch their navel prior to pointing to the circle where the dresses are deposited.

2. OGBETUTU LENOGIE. This is another form of "hide and seek" game (of the stay-where-you-are-until-found variety) played by boys and girls. A group of children appoints a leader among themselves. This leader is called "Ogie." This leader blindfolds one member, "It," while others go to hide. When the leader is sure that every member has found a place to hide, the "It" is left to find those in hiding. The first person to be caught becomes the new "It" in the subsequent game. Where the "It" fails, those in hiding come out on the leader's call. The game is then repeated.

3. EKPENGHA MUEN EWE VBUDEZI. There seems to be uniformity in this game all over the State. The song pattern, however, varies from one ethnic group to the others even though they all convey the same meaning.

Boys and girls get together and form a big circle joining hands. A child goes to the centre of the circle to represent a "goat." One or two other children stay outside the circle representing the "lions." Those in the circle move anti-clockwise as fast as they can to prevent the "lions" from getting at the "goat" while they sing this song:

He! gioremu
He! gioremu
Gioremu no mu gbe re
He! gioremu. Me. Me.

The "goat" is free to run in and out of the circle. Once the "lion" succeeds in catching the "goat," new people are selected

for both position and the game continues.

4. AKHUE. The game of "Akhue" as played in Benin is more detailed than in any other part of the State. In Urhobo, the game is also called Akhue but it is Ise in Owan and Ishan. The court size is the same in the four groups. A few special marbles known as "Abode," "Odibogie" and "Ogie" planted behind the last line make the Benin version different from the others. The two teams decide on who is to start the game after all the marbles have been planted. One marble which is supposed to be the most beautiful one, called "Umogun" is used to start the game.

The leader of the team starts the game by spinning the "Umogun" through his own court across the dividing line to dislodge one or more of his opponent's marbles. If he succeeds in dislodging any marbles, the opposing team in return will use both the "Umogun" and the dislodged marble/s in an attempt to dislodge the other team's marbles. Marbles are usually shared among the team members on the basis of skill and age. The most skillful player of the team receives the greatest number of marbles to use in their attempts to dislodge or displace the opponent's marbles. The team that succeeds in dislodging all the opposing teams marbles is the winner.

Rules: 1. Each player must spin the marble. No throwing is allowed.

2. A player must stand or be behind the "Ogie" before playing.

3. Any marble that passes the dividing line known as "Uwu" is valid. A marble which displaces both the player's and the opponents'

marbles is returned to the player and the dislodged marbles replanted.

4. A marble spinning along in the opponent's court should never be obstructed by the opponent. It can only be stopped after it had dislodged one marble. A skillful player can dislodge as many marbles at one time as possible with fast spinning.

5. A service marble that ends up at the neutral space can be picked by any player.

5. IKOTO. A game that demands much skill and dexerity is Ikoto, played by boys on sandy places. A white shell of a dead snail cut into a conical shape is the only implement needed (Figure 27). Two or more players sit or squat in a circle around a well prepared sandy spot.

The oldest player starts the game by spinning the conical shapped shell on the sand, cuts the sand beneath the spinning shell with the fingers so that it turns upside down.

Each player takes his turn in an anti-clockwise direction. At the end of the first round, all the players who were unsuccessful in their attempts are penalized by the successful ones. The penalty is that all those who were successful would give each of those who failed a knock with the shell on the back of their palms. Sometimes the number of knocks could be two or more.

Another version of the game is to allow the unsuccessful players a second or more rounds until one player is left to be penalized by all others.

One other method of play is to spin the shell in the air and allow it to fall on the palm spinning before skillfully making it to turn face down on the sand. Only the experienced and skillful players use this method.

There are two rules in the game:

1. The shell must spin before it is made to turn upside down.

2. If by chance the shell turns upside down before the sand underneath it is cut, the player must quickly draw a short line on the ground with a finger to make the play valid. If the player allows any other player to make this line before him, then the play is made invalid and the player is given a second chance.

The pain that results from the penalty of the game makes parents or some adults disapprove of children indulging in the game.

6. ULOKO TUE EBE. This game is similar to Okereke Okereke described below. Instead of a stick, the palm kernel is the implement used.

About seven to fifteen children sit or squat in a circle formation. The leader distributes the palm kernels one to each player, and leads in a song "Uloko tue ebe" to which the others respond "Emue de emuen." As they all sing, the palm kernel nuts are passed rhythmically from one player to the other in an anti-clockwise direction. Any player who is found to possess two palm kernels at a time is penalized with a gentle knock on the head by each member of the group.

The game continues until members agree to disperse.

7. BHA GHI HORE. The content of this acting game for girls, as well as the style, is traditional. A queen or any important woman in the traditional society would need the services of house servants and maids. Thus, this aspect of social life is being preserved for us in this acting game.

About ten to twenty girls break into two equal groups, each under an elected leader who is designated "Queen." One "Queen" goes to ask for the services of a house-maid from the other. Thereupon a set dialogue takes place (literal translation).

Leader B - "What do you come for?"
" A - "I come for a child."
" B - "What do you want to do with a child?"
" A - "To help me in my domestic work, Queen."
" B - "Will you take this?"
" A - "Queen, this will fight my husband and I together."
" B - "Won't you take this?"
" A - "Queen, this will steal my soup."
" B - "What of this?"
" A - "Queen, this is bigger than I am."
" B - "Don't you like this?"
" A - "Queen, this will take my husband from me."
" B - "Won't you take me?"
" A - "Queen, a Queen does not take a Queen."
" B - "Okay, choose the one you like."
" A - "It is what one likes that one takes."

She finally makes her choice and goes with one of the girls. The other leader does the same until each girl is taken by the leaders. The only rule is that once a girl is taken by a leader, she does not go back to her former group.

8. OKEREKE OKEREKE. This game is similar to the game of Uloko Tue Ebe described earlier. The implement used for this is a short stick about six inches long. About ten to twenty children sit in a circular formation each holding a stick. A leader or someone who knows the game leads in a song "Okereke Okereke" to which others respond "Dim, dim, kpom kpom." This song is repeated several times as each player knocks his stick on the ground to the rhythm of the song. When the leader says "Oganaga" all respond "Oganaga Yim" and each player passes his stick to the player on his right. The song is repeated several times to ensure continuous passing of the sticks. The leader would look out for any player who had two sticks with him as a result of his inability to keep up with the rhythm. Such a defaulter is made to sit at the centre of the circle while the game continues.

9. ERHEN BA VBUHUMWOKE. There seems to be uniformity in this game as played in many parts of the State. Boys and girls can play together. They join hands and make a big circle. They then loose hands and pair up leaving the leader without a partner.

At the signal of the leader, players hang on to their partner's shoulders. At a second signal, the hangers come down and run anti-clockwise around the circle with the following song:

Erhen ba vbuhumwoke

Le se erha hiare

Le se iyure hiare

Tule Tule Tule.

Meaning: "There is fire on the mountain. Leave your father and mother and run for your life." Players who are not running clap hands to cheer others. At the signal by the leader that the fire is out, the players who are running try to get back to their partners. The last pair is made to kneel down at the centre of the circle. The elimination continues with the repetition of the game.

At the signal that the fire is out, no runner is allowed to run back or across the circle to his partner.

As there are often incidents of fire outbreaks because of the grass houses in the village, this game seems to be a reminder to the children that everyone has to run for dear life. But this running must be directed by the older members of the community.

10. ISE[6] (A game of chance). A guessing game enjoyed by boys and girls alike is Ise. It is played with any type of the local seeds available either indoors or outdoors. Each player is expected to bring some seeds in order to participate in the game.

One player takes some seeds enclosed in his palm and calls to another player "Ta," meaning guess. The guesser is expected to give one of the following guesses:

1. "Okpan" which is an odd number between one and seven,

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[6]Games number ten to sixteen were reviewed from: Egharevba, J.U., Benin Games and Sports, (Sapele, Central Press Ltd., 1951), pp. 12-20.

that is one, three, five and seven.

2. "Izu" is an even number between one and seven, that is two, four and six.

3. "Oyo" is any number above seven.

If the guesser guesses correctly, the caller surrenders all the seeds in his palm. But if the guess is wrong, there is no loss of seeds to either party. The winner is the player who succeeds in gaining all the seeds of the other players.

11. AGHADAGHADA. This game is similar to the games of Aboki in Urhobo and Kala in Ishan.

The only difference is that in this Benin version, the guesser is given a second chance to re-start the game after a wrong guess.

12. OKHOKHO NA GBEVA. This game is similar to the games of passing sticks, palm kernels or pebbles from one player to the other in a circle formation already recorded in this study.

In this version, the leader holds all the sticks or palm kernels at the start of the game as opposed to the individual holding his stick or palm kernel. At the start of a song, "Ivin vbare," to which others respond "Toloza," the leader begins to pass the sticks or palm kernels to other players. This he does at a fast speed to the other players. The leader watches out for any player who at one moment is not in possession of the implement. Such a player is eliminated.

The only rule which is strictly enforced by the leader is that no one is allowed to scramble for the implement.

13. KOKOYE OYE. This is a hopping contest over a given

distance. The hoppers (boys or girls) form two groups and decide on the length of the space. Each group goes to each end of the spaces, which could be fifteen yards or more depending on the age of the hoppers.

One hopper hops from his position across the space to the other group and back without changing legs or touching the ground with the second foot. Any hopper who is unsuccessful goes to join the other group. The group with the greater number of players after everyone has had his turn, is the winner.

The song that goes with the hopping exercise is:

Kokoye Oye

Kokoye Oye

Gbeyowe Ramoto

Ughayewe Ramoto.

Meaning: "See that your second foot does not touch the ground."

14. ULELE. This game is a test of strength for boys. Two groups compete in carrying each other piggy-back over a given distance. A variation is to carry your partner on the shoulders.

Each of the two groups form a single line behind a marked place. One member of each group stands at the end of the given distance. At a given command by the leader, the two members at the end of the given distance run to carry the first person on each line piggy-back across the space. The person so carried goes back to carry another member and so on. The first group to complete the rounds is the winner. The game can be repeated.

15. OGBO. This is a type of "Tug-of-War" and it is more

popular with boys than girls. As soon as there are enough boys to pair up for the contest a line is drawn on the ground and each member of the pair stands on each side of the line. The pair grip each other's hands and the contest begins. The whole exercise is to see how many will be able to pull their partner over the line.

16. IVBOMI. It was recorded that the eldest son of Oba Ozolua (1481 - 1503) fell, fractured his legs, became crippled and so could not reign as King of Benin. He and others were jumping over "Agbodo" pond (Egharevba, 1951:18). There are still jumping exercises among the children - mainly jumping for distance.

17. OFEN OYEYEKUYE. This is like the English game of "cat and mouse." One player is chosen "cat" and one "mouse." The rest form a circle holding hands tightly. The "cat" is outside, and the "mouse" is inside the circle. The "cat" attempts to catch the "mouse" who is free to run in and out of the circle. If the "cat" succeeds in catching the "mouse," their roles are reversed. But if the "cat" fails to catch the "mouse" after a long time, they will be replaced. The "mouse" is not allowed to run far away from the circle.

18. OGIUROISE. Although this game is played by boys and adult men, the latter have spent more of their leisure hours on this game than the boys. There are two players at a time.

There are three versions of the game: "Ise Edo," "Ise Urhobo" and "Ise Odun." The implement used is a wooden flat piece with six pairs of holes and one each at the side (see Figure 11). The larger holes at the sides are not used for the game but for storing

the seeds or marbles. Each hole contains four seeds or marbles. Each player has the six holes at his side.

A player starts by taking the whole four seeds in any of his six holes and distributes one seed to each hole anti-clockwise, both into his holes and those of his opponent. The opponent does the same thing and they alternate this process. No seed is ever put in the hole from where the seeds have been carried for distribution.

To win a seed or seeds, a player's distribution-seed must be either the second or third seed in any of the opponent holes. Where this occurs the two or three seeds in such holes have been won by the player. The distribution and winning of the seeds continue alternately until the remaining seeds are too few for the game. The winner is the one who has won the most seeds.

Rules: 1. To begin the game, each hole must contain four seeds.

2. In distributing the seeds during play, only one seed at a time is dropped into a hole.

3. No seed is placed in the hole from where seeds were collected for distribution.

4. To win seeds, the distributing-seed makes the number of the seeds in the hole either two or three.

5. Once a seed is won, it is never used in play again.

6. There is no limit to the number of seeds that can be in any hole while the game is on.

7. Distribution of seeds is always anti-clockwise.

Summary. Several significant characteristics emerged in the game patterns of the Edo speaking people. First, the majority of the games were of a group nature rather than a team or individual form. Second, very few overtly aggressive games were located and described. Neither boxing nor wrestling were popular activities among the four groups in question and, in point of fact, those examples of wrestling which were found were often associated with ritual. Third, gambling games were non-existent. While chance did affect the outcome of some games, no wagering occurred.

Many of the games of the area were coupled with chants or songs. In many cases translations have been included but in others only the broad conceptual meanings were set out. In part this was due to a lack of information which accrued as a result of taboos associated with the situation or as a consequence of ignorance as to the origin.

A characteristic of the Edo speaking groups' games was that they were played at night (during the "moonlight" time). Children spend most of the daylight hours at school, with their parents in farming activities, at the markets, or in hunting exercises. Most frequently the play area was located within the village compound or in close proximity. The implements used were those items found in ready supply in the immediate environs.

CHAPTER V

GAMES IN THE CULTURAL PATTERN AND THEIR RELATION TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THEORY

There are many definitions of a theory because each definition has implications for the process of theory construction. Generally, a theory can be taken as a set of propositions or inter-related concepts; it is an attempt to create a model of reality and not reality itself. It is for predictive purposes. Sociological theories, therefore, are models of social reality. "Theories are best seen as approximations to knowledge" (Hage, 1972:183). In essence, theories are never true or false, right or wrong, but are probablistic; that is partly true part of the time. This quality lends theories to constant improvements.

The role of theory in research, according to Merton (1948), is not a one-way relationship. While the functions of theory in research are to initiate, design and prosecute empirical enquiry, the findings in return help in the development of improved theories. Empirical research, therefore, goes far beyond the passive role of verifying and testing theory (Merton, 1948:505). One example of the active role of empirical research is in the common experience of observing unanticipated anomalous and strategic data. The investigator draws inferences from the observations, and depending on his general

theoretical orientation, these inferences might lead ultimately to a new or extended theory. It is also a common practice that theoretical interest tends to shift to those areas where appropriate research techniques have been designed which enable a researcher to create models which permit verification or refutation of the basic propositions. This makes for a flow of relevant data which helps to improve the quality of a theory. Furthermore, new techniques discovered during an empirical research study might help to re-focus theoretical interest. Another frequent result of an empirical research is the clarification of concepts. This the researcher does by establishing indices of the variables under consideration. "The entire movement of thought which was christened 'operationalism' is only one conspicuous case of the researcher demanding that concepts be defined clearly enough for him to go to work" (Merton, 1948:505). The indices of the conceptualized items must correlate with what they signify. In recognition of the need for devising indices of concepts, Durkheim asserted that "it is necessary . . . to substitute for the internal fact which escapes us an external fact that symbolizes it and to study the former through the latter" (Durkheim, 1933:66). The difficulty of establishing this relationship is one of the critical problems of research. Notwithstanding this difficulty, attempts have been made to analyse the functions of games or playforms in society through some empirical research.

THE APPLICATION OF THEORY TO THE STUDY OF GAMES

At present the development and utilization of models and theories within the socio-cultural dimensions of physical education is at a rudimentary level in comparison with other fields of research. Very few researchers in this area have addressed themselves to the "why" questions primarily because of the early stages in the development of this area of study but also in part because of the fragmentary nature of the research that has been undertaken. Among those who have are Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962 and 1966), Huizinga (1955), Piaget (1951), Salter (1967), Jones (1967), Kenyon (1968) and Glassford (1970).

One of the most recent ones is Allardt whose central thesis is that certain types of physical activities are associated with certain social characteristics such as the division of labor and child rearing practices. This theory is here applied in a study of the traditional children's games of four selected cultural groups of the Mid-Western Nigeria, namely Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo in an attempt to better understanding of the culture of the people . To the present time, there has been no field research undertaken to verify, refute, or alter the conceptual schema devised by Allardt, and Allardt himself, through personal communication, stated that such research was necessary in order to determine whether the model corresponds in any way with the reality. In other words, while Allardt has developed an interesting theoretical model, from the standpoint of theory construction, it is now required

that the heuristic model be tested. At Watkins has pointed out:

> The two categories of the "model of," empirical and heuristic, serve two separate functions in regard to the gradient of uses. The empirical model is limited to the work of pictorially presenting data, whereas, the heuristic, with its secondary relationships to theory and the test of theory, operates at the remaining levels. Owing to its innate limitations therefore, the empirical model should only play a transitional role in the methodological process. This in effect, should be the first step that the researcher embarks upon, during which observations are ordered according to factors which he deems as important. In studies devoted to the historical aspects of our field far too often they both start and finish at this point, although, . . . there is a movement to push past this mere descriptive level (Watkins, 1971:12-13).

Further, there is a danger in that a high level of enthusiasm is often evoked by models (such as that developed by Allardt), and they often lead to an oversimplification of the reality or to an over-emphasis on symbols or form. These limitations must be kept clearly in mind when such a model is applied, for the results that accrue are indicative of the model's working and not of reality. This point is clearly enunciated by Kuhn:

> One of the dangers of using models is that the user may forget that his model is not of reality, and start making unrealistic prescriptions for treating troubles of the real world on the assumption that it is like the model (Kuhn, 1963: 37).

If, however, a model is viewed as useful means toward the end of better understanding, then the application of models as Allardt's in the study of games in culture has merit. Based on this assumption, the decision was taken to seek out the description

of the games of selected groups of the Mid-Western Nigerians (all groups had originated from the Benin Empire). Once this had been done, it would be possible to determine whether or not the games fit into the categories as predicted by Allardt's model.

An overview of ethnographical literature which was based on the four study groups (the Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo), coupled with personal knowledge of the area,[1] provided data on their division of labor, social and political constraints, and child obedience training. These have been dealt with extensively in an earlier section but a brief summation of these three social characteristics is necessary in order to keep the Allardt typology in focus.

GAMES AND DIVISION OF LABOR

In attempting to explain evolutionary, structural, and institutional characteristics of societies, Allardt selected as his point of departure two general assumptions:

> (1) In the development of societies there occurs a transition from particularistic loyalties, or from mechanical solidarity . . . to a more universalistic loyalty, or to organic solidarity.[2]

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[1]The writer was born and raised in Owan Division of the Mid-Western State and had taught in Schools and Colleges in Benin, Owan, Ishan and had conducted examinations for Teachers Colleges in Urhobo.

[2]This concept is tied up with Durkheim's twofold sources social life -- similitude of consciousness and division of labor. In Durkeim's famous theory on the division of labor, the two social types were those which he term as being based on "mechanical solidarity" and those based on "organic solidarity." A society in which solidarity was induced by a community of representations which gives rise to laws imposing uniform beliefs and practices upon individuals under threat of repressive measures. This he called "mechanical solidarity" which obtains among primitive societies. The second society was where the division of labor while it encouraged individualism, also enhanced "organic solidarity." In this, the increased population resulted in an increased struggle for existence that only through progressive differentiation of functions was made possible (Durkheim, 1946:62). This is the case with most industrialized countries today.

> (2) In explaining the degree and kind of solidarity, two theoretical variable, the degree of division of labor and the degree of pressure toward uniformity seem to be of crucial importance. . . .
>
> There are many results and theories indicating that solidarity increases when the pressure toward uniformity increases (Allardt, 1969:77).

The point is made that people who live in situations that are undifferentiated[3] need strong norms, traditions, and particularistic loyalties in order to be able to orient themselves in the social environment. Conversely, in situations that are highly differentiated (a high division of labor) patterns of the exchange of goods become important and constitute a basis for solidarity.

The variable, division of labor, is a theoretical term but Allardt attempted to operationalize by defining it as ". . . the number of dissimilar items for exchange: the higher the number of items for exchange, the greater the division of labor" (Allardt, 1969:78). For purposes of gross comparison or analysis of societies and communities ". . . the degree of industrialization or indices of economic development may be taken as sufficiently precise indicators" (Allardt, 1969:78) of the degree of division of labor which has been achieved.

By and large, the peoples of Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo are principally farmers. Modern technology has had little impact on their traditional life style where the majority of the peoples provide

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[3]The concept of differentiation derives extensively from the writings of Talcott Parsons who viewed differentiation as a process by which simple structures are divided into functionally differing components which became relatively independent of each other and are later re-combined into more complex structures in which the differentiated units function in a complementary manner.

their own basic needs. The conscience collective is predominant and the key institutions are the age grades, the extended family, the nuclear family, the religious rituals and festivals.

A central mechanism for dividing labor is the age grade or age stratification system which is common among the groups studied and which dictates that the young people below the age of approximately twenty years do menial work (i.e., sweeping the market, carry the mud to build houses, clearing the bush around the houses, carry the water); those between the ages of twenty and forty engage in such communal work as building the houses and the market places; the older age groups carry out those duties necessary in the administration of the village, policing the village and meting out sanctions. A distinct separation of tasks related to religious and spiritual functions is present among all groups studied. Primarily appointed as a consequence of heredity, the spiritual leaders of the villages jealously protect their roles in matters which pertain to religious and spiritual functions. Among these are the priests, witch-doctors and sooth-sayers who provide these specialized services.

There also have been some specialized products and services among the people of Benin. The Benin wood carvers are world famous for their craftsmanship. In addition, the skills of metal casting date back to the early development of the Empire. Some members of the villages specialize in mask making, basket weaving, pottery work, and the weaving of cloth. These goods are sold in the village markets.

At the nuclear family level the father provides the bulk of the food while the mother prepares the meals with the assistance of the children. In the operation of the farm the males are responsible for clearing the bush, felling the trees, firing the slash, and making the mounds or forming the holes into which the seeds are planted. Women and children alike aid in the planting and harvesting process.

In addressing the question of the study group's place on the continuum of the "division of labor" (as suggested by Allardt) it is necessary to establish a reference group. If the social groups situated in the continent of Africa south of the Sahara are used as the basis of comparison then the Edo-speaking group of Mid-Western Nigeria would fall on the continuum of "division of labor" toward the high end of the scale. Taken as a whole, at this point in time and in comparison with the industrialized nations of the world, the Owan, Urhobo, Ishan and Benin have a reasonably small number of dissimilar products and services within their communities; a reasonable small number of dissimilar labor tasks. Thus, in this comparative field, they would be situated toward the end of the continuum labelled "low division of labor." While the groups under study are dominated by institutions such as the nuclear family, kinship groups, and age grades, it must be noted that there is a degree of occupational specialization, special schooling programs, and the opportunity for political participation. Industrialization is developing as typified by the plywood plant,

cement factory, experimental farm, fossil fuel production and a glass factory. Thus, the group may be subjectively placed lower on the scale than industrialized nations but they are definitely not at the low extreme.

In applying the variable of division of labor to his theoretical model of games in society, Allardt noted that many game activities started within the boundaries of a community, a neighborhood, or the kinship group. Fixed or formalized rules governing play in such environments were not required and those that did exist were subject to ready alteration.

> With increasing differentiation these games and sport activities have become more formalized and organized by new institutions. In the course of development sport activities have themselves become increasingly differentiated (Allardt, 1970: 25).

It was based upon this rationale that the first hypothesis was formulated: "The higher the division of labor, the more formalized the rules of the games."

In order to test this hypothesis the general dependent variable was determined, that is, the frequency of occurrence or number of games found within the study groups which had formalized rules. For this purpose, formalized rules were operationally defined as occurring in those games which had clearly specified or precise procedures which demanded sanctions when violated; those which contained a time-bound or score-bound component; and those which had a clearly designated and recognizable space or play format. Conversely, a non-formalized rule structure was considered to be

one wherein alternations in controls or guidelines for behavior could be initiated by players without danger of significant sanctions; games which were organized with no fixed time, score, space and/or number of players.

Using these definitions, the seventy-five identified traditional games of Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo were classified as having a high level of formalized rules or as having a non-formalized rule structure (see Charts A, B, C and D of Appendix B). The results of this analysis are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

GAMES AND DIVISION OF LABOR

FORMALIZED AND NON-FORMALIZED STRUCTURE

Game Characteristic	CULTURAL GROUPS			
	Benin	Ishan	Owan	Urhobo
Formalized Rules	3 (17%)	2 (12%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
Non-Formalized Rules	15 (83%)	15 (88%)	16 (80%)	18 (90%)

In order to determine whether these numbers of the two groups of games were different, a series of tests of significance of the differences between percentages was carried out (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF GAMES WITH FORMALIZED RULES AND STRUCTURE AND GAMES WITH NON-FORMALIZED RULES AND STRUCTURE

CULTURE GROUPS	CLASS OF GAMES		CRITICAL RATIO
	Formalized Rules	Non-Formalized Rules	
Benin	17%	83%	2.90*
Ishan	12%	88%	2.48*
Owan	20%	80%	2.30*
Urhobo	10%	90%	2.80*

*Significant at the .10 level.

The results of these analyses were taken as evidence to partially support Allardt's hypothesis that in areas where the division of labor is low there is a tendency for the games of the people to be characterized by an informal rule structure. Indeed, when examining the games in closer detail, they include a variety of methods of selecting groups or teams although the leader is often the eldest among them. (This is somewhat reflective of the age grade structure which is prevalent throughout the area in which the data was gathered.) Occasionally the strongest player would impose his authority on the others as leaders.[4] This informal manner of organizing the leader

[4]Frequently children tested their strength through wrestling matches of rough-house boxing. These activities were not considered to be games in that there were no voluntary control systems. Anger, frustration and hostility were often precursors of these aggressive acts, and while there were no controls between the battlers, often older children would become arbitrators and separate them. Through these fights a hierarchy of relative strength or toughness was established among the children.

role is quite deviant from the formal games of Europe and America. It also becomes apparent that the roles played by children in their traditional games are homogeneous -- specific roles are seldom established. This situation is rapidly changing in the Mid-West State, and games with marked degree of role differentiation are becoming popular notably as a result of diffusion. Among these are soccer, cricket, volleyball, field hockey and basketball. Soccer is widespred throughout the region of study and other activities with a formal organization component are being introduced by teachers of physical education.

A concept of time is a critical characteristic of a society with a highly structured division of labor in that the inter-play of functionally different roles must be combined, often in a time-bound, linear sequence in order to produce a complex whole. In many games of a formal nature, time plays a significant role to the point where strategies of play which utilize the time available for play emerge and are shaped and re-shaped as a result of their success and failure. Not a single traditional game incorporated any element of time constraint.

Within the more familistic social organizational patterns, which are characterized by a lower level of division of labor, contractual relationships are limited and cover a very narrow sector in the lives of the people. As the society shifts more towards what Tonnies termed a Gesellschaft-like society, contractual relationships take on an increasingly important role. The games of a society tend to be reflective of the differences as well. The

traditional games which have been described tend to be organized on the basis of habit, where behavior is more spontaneous, and those rules that do exist are handed on by word of mouth. The highly formalized games of a society require a high level of contractual development. Rules and sanctions are clearly specified in elaborate texts designed to ensure initial equality and standardized sanctions for rule violation. Change is often sought after and idealized as progress. Informal sanctions are weak and formal law prevails, but in most cases offence against the law invokes little social disapproval.

In reviewing the games of the Benin, Owan, Ishan and Urhobo within the framework set out by Allardt, there seems to be some justification, on the basis of the data gathered, for accepting the hypothesis that the higher the division of labor within a social group, the more formalized will be the rules of their games. Certainly broad generalizations cannot be made on the basis of the few games studied, yet intuitively as one examines the game format with the framework established, the proposition takes on added meaning.

GAMES AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

In every society, the public act as a unit to regulate its internal organization and its external relations. But the degree of pressure towards uniformity varies from one society to another. According to Allardt, there are two conditions necessary for strong pressures towards uniformity in a society. First is that

in such a society, there are existing norms which are specific and related to strong sanctions which are applied with great consistency. The second is that there are no or very few conflicts between norms (Allardt, 1964:171). In the traditional societies, the sanction pattern is informal, determined by custom and is repressive in its penalty provisions. An offence against the common beliefs or sentiments within the society is an offence against the common morality, and hence against the system as a whole. In contrast, sanction pattern in modern society is formal, determined by law and is restitutive. Similarly, it is also possible to see within modern society, the subtle difference between the political and social constraints. Quite often, the governmental body (the polity or political organization) acts or takes decisions on certain national issues which may or may not be in the interest of the society without asking for public opinion. There are, of course, a few exceptions such as the Canadian example which is taking place at the time of writing - a machinery set up by the national government to solicit public opinion (the society) with regard to possible changes in the "Immigration law." But in traditional, small societies such as those found in most African and developing countries, political institutions are often coterminous with kinship relations, and the political structure and kinship organization is frequently fused (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940:6-7).

As had been pointed out earlier in this study, Allardt assumed that societies with strong political constraints would also

be typified by strong social constraints. This has not been the case with the groups under study.

Among the Benis, the Ishans and to less extent, the Urhobos, hereditary rulers with the attendant institutions play an important part in the ascription of political authority. Hereditary chieftainship is fully developed especially in Benin and Ishan. This is accompanied by a system of state ranks and titles and is organized into a number of corporate groups. Appointment to non-hereditary titles and succession to the hereditary ones must be confirmed by the king or head chief, and it is through these title holders that the king or head chief exercises his authority over his subjects (Bradbury, 1957:16). But among the Owan people and parts of Urhobo, is found a more decentralized political system with authority vested more in the age grade organization. Membership in "title-association" is essential for any person who wishes to exercise political authority. Seniority is generally reckoned by "title-age." Thus in Benin, with a centralized State and a hierarchy of chiefs, the political constraints would be stronger than in Owan with a decentralized state of government. It is only at the village level that the latter has a formal, organized government institution. But is must be mentioned that the social constraints in these four groups are similar and quite strong. The traditional practices pertaining to taboos and their attendant sanctions are well observed. Fines, compensations, oaths, ordeals such as public ridicule are some of the measures of punishments for offences against taboos.

The moral authority of the husband makes the relationship between him and his wives that of guardian and wards. There is an open rivalry among wives and also among children. The four groups all exhibit strong pressures toward uniformity and social cohesion as a result of common cultural heritage.

Within the narrow confines of this study the social constraints among the four groups are reasonably uniform and strong. The political constrains are not uniform over the four groups. The Benin and Ishan have stronger political constraints that do the Owan and Urhobo.

In a society in which there are strong social and political constraints, Allardt contends that activities which require physical strength will be more important to the people than those which require technical skills. These physical activities also include games. It was on this basis that the second proposition was formulated thus: "The stronger the social and political constraints the more important is physical strength and the less important technical skill." A game of physical strength is defined as one in which the outcome depends mainly on the innate physical strength of the participant and in which skill is of secondary importance. In a game of technical skill, the outcome depends on the technique, manual dexerity, and fine motor performance of the player. Sometimes a knowledge of the game is of crucial importance.

Based on the above definitions, seventy-five traditional games of Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo were classified (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

GAMES AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

GAMES OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND GAMES OF TECHNICAL SKILL

Game Characteristic	CULTURAL GROUPS			
	Benin	Ishan	Owan	Urhobo
Physical Strength	9 (50%)	13 (76%)	13 (65%)	11 (55%)
Technical Skill	9 (50%)	4 (23%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)

In order to determine whether these numbers of the two groups of games were different, a series of tests of significance of the differences between percentages was carried out (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF GAMES OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH

AND GAMES OF TECHNICAL SKILL

CULTURE GROUPS	CLASS OF GAMES		CRITICAL RATIO
	Physical Strength	Technical Skill	
Benin	50%	50%	0
Ishan	76%	23%	1.96*
Owan	65%	35%	1.28
Urhobo	55%	45%	.45

*Significant at the .10 level.

From this analysis it would seem that Allardt's hypothesis must be refuted. Given the relative uniformity of the social controls among the four groups and in recognition that the Benin and Ishan have stronger political constraints that the other two groups it would be expected from Allardt's typology that the first two groups should have a greater frequency of games which require physical strength than the other two groups. Such was not the case. The Benin and Ishan had 22 such games between them and the Owan and Urhobo 24.

It was further conjectured that among groups that had strong social and political constraints the number of games which required physical strength would outnumber those which comprised a high degree of technical skill. A statistically significant difference in these numbers was found only in the case of the Ishan although among the Owan and Urhobo the numbers of games of physical strength outnumbered those of technical skill.

A review of the games of the cultural groups under study showed that while there were many chasing, hopping and pulling games which demanded physical strength, there were others such as the marble games which were technical in nature. Certainly it is difficult to make general conclusions with the few data analysed.

Although the lack of modern technology demands more use of physical strength, there are many tasks that also need technical skill in traditional societies. Examples of these are the traditional crafts.

Further, Allardt's basic proposition leaves much to be desired. The linking together of two such variables as social constraints and political constraints is theoretically unsound. In many societies it can be found that one variable is high while the other is low thereby potentially producing a strong interaction effect. In point of fact, many theoreticians would argue that the placing of these two variables together in a single predictive statement is like adding "apples and oranges." An extensive review of these social characteristics pertinent to their relationship with the games in a given society is required.

GAMES AND CHILD OBEDIENCE TRAINING

It was Allardt's contention that severe child obedience training is associated with aggressive behavior. In the same sense Sutton-Smith talked about the "ascriptive game culture" whereby children in their play imitate in very circumscribed ways the behavior of their parents. In conclusion, Sutton-Smith states that

> the readiness of the children to be triggered off by the example of adults also suggests that ludic tendencies have something of an innate character but must be released by appropriate external models (Sutton-Smith, 1969:139).

In traditional culture, social life and games appear to have been largely synonymous in early childhood. Games are part and parcel of the cultural systems within which they function. Severe obedience training could be seen as one other aspect of the

pressures towards uniformity and cohesion in the society. Like the Yako society and other tribes of southern Nigeria, most African societies derive their cohesion by the "overlapping representation and membership of their lineage males in a hierarchic series of functionally differentiated associations" (Smith, 1968:118). In societies such as these, Sutton-Smith contends that the people, including children, "remain obedient to the social system but relieve their ambivalence about it by displaced attack in the miniature social worlds of strategy games" (Roberts and Sutton-Smith, 1962:129). Thus people "Express aggression without reality consequences. . . . hurt people without really hurting them, kill without really killing" (Menninger, 1942:175).

Among the Benis, Ishans, Owans and Urhobos, in most cases, a child is born into a polygamous family where he or she is faced with perpetual competitions among the siblings. Every mother wants her child to be the "best." With a universally marked patrilineal bias in the kinship and lineage organization, the subordinate position of women is evident from early childhood. Although the emphasis on primogeniture is an accepted custom, yet is is not without some jealous feelings. Under a very domineering and pervasive father, the child is constantly subjected to taking orders. Of course, tradition demands full respect to one's parents and seniors. Among the Urhobos and a few cases in the other cultural groups, a child at the age of three, according to the custom, has to live with the maternal grandmother. Here there is more relaxed obedience

training. The two sets of standards created by these two "homes" present a kind of conflict in the child. Circumcision or clitoridectomy, funeral rites, cermonial observances and initiations into the age grade systems are but a few of the socialization processes of the child. These in their turn, make heavy demands on the child as they are all backed with sanctions. Thus the child is constantly subjected to threats, reprimands and even corporal punishments with regard to his manner of dress, expression, sitting positions for girls, eating habits, and manner of greeting adults and parents. It is impossible within such a study as this to give extensive details of the negative sanctions and the intensity and frequencies of the punishments that are meted out to children. If the above methods of child socialization were compared with those employed in modern societies, the child rearing practices in these four groups under study would be considered severe. Certainly, in comparison with the traditional circumpolar Eskimo and the Commanche of the American Plains, the child obedience training of the Edo-speaking groups were very severe. In comparison with other sub-Saharan groups the contrast in practices would not be great. But among the Edo-speaking people the various sanctions outlined above provided learning situations for their children which reasonable adaptive strategies.

In order to test the hypothesis that "The more severe the obedience training, the more aggressive are the activities," it was important to define operationally "aggression" as "a form of psychobiologic energy either innate or arising in response to,

or intensified by frustration which may be manifested by overt behavior such as inflicting pain or covert hostile attitude; it is culture prone." Based on this defintion, the seventy-five traditional games from the four groups were analysed (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

GAMES AND CHILD OBEDIENCE TRAINING

AGGRESSIVE AND NON-AGGRESSIVE GAMES

Game Characteristic	CULTURAL GROUPS			
	Benin	Ishan	Owan	Urhobo
Aggressive	3 (17%)	2 (12%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)
Non-Aggressive	15 (83%)	15 (83%)	13 (65%)	14 (60%)

In order to determine whether these numbers of the two groups of games were different, a series of tests of significance of the differences between percentages was carried out (see Table 6).

TABLE 6

COMPARISON OF AGGRESSIVE GAMES AND NON-AGGRESSIVE GAMES

CULTURE GROUPS	CLASS OF GAMES		CRITICAL RATIO
	Aggressive	Non-Aggressive	
Benin Isha	17%	83%	2.32*
Ishan	12%	83%	2.2*
Owan	35%	65%	.61
Urhobo Urhobo	30%	60%	1.2

*Significant at .10 level.

The results of the analysis do not support Allardt's proposition that severe child obedience training is associated with aggressive activities. In these four cultural groups, the analysis revealed that there are more non-aggressive games (57) than aggressive (18). None of the games collected fitted into the examples of aggressive sports contained in Allardt's typology - rugby, boxing and American football. The findings of this study have also been supported by a very recent study on "War, Sports and Aggression: An Empirical Test of Two Rival Theories" by Richard G. Sipes (1973). This study casts strong doubt on the idea that there is such a thing as accumulable aggressive tension, certainly on the social level and perhaps, under most circumstances, even on the individual level. The conclusive findings of this

were that

> War and combative-type sports . . . do not, as often claimed, act as alternative channels for the discharge of accumulable aggressive tensions. Rather than being functional alternatives, war and combative sports activities in a society appear to be components of a broader culture pattern (Sipes, 1973:75).

The relevance of these findings to Allardt's third proposition in particular and to the entire study in general, must be noted.

The tacit implication in Allardt's proposition that severe obedience training is related to aggressive games is that there is a build up of hostility or tension whenever strong negative sanctions are applied. This view was not found tenable by Sipes (1973:80) nor was it supported by the findings in this study. The absence of inter-group competitions in the many festivals and other ceremonies among the people are also indicative of the prevalence of non-aggressive behavior patterns among the people. As was mentioned earlier, wrestling matches serve as initiation rituals and also for the individual to assert his position in the group. In these societies, there is more evidence of cooperative living than of competition strategies. The situation is gradually changing today as people compete to acquire modern amenities. Children now engage in aggressive sports such as soccer, basketball and boxing. The infusion of new values and norms will doubtless yield significant changes in the game patterns of the children.

In conclusion, the above analysis of the data supports the validity of Sipe's Culture Pattern Model more than the Drive Discharge Model of the Psychoanalists. This is no question but that the Drive Discharge Model must be further investigated particularly as it pertains to games and organized sport. The issue is far from being effectively and definitively resolved.

GAMES AND INTERACTION OF DIVISION OF LABOR AND SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The institution of chieftaincy and the age grade system in the four groups studied manifest the interaction between the division of labor and the social and political constraints. As has been said earlier, in some areas, the age grades do not only do various types of communal work, but also help to preserve the traditional practices. There is also a form of division of labor among the chiefs who exercise political control. It has also been stated that some of the crafts practised, such as the carving of idols, weaving of ceremonial dresses, help to preserve some of the cultural heritage which often times constitute constraints on the people. The society is sacred in that tradition and ritual play a large part in the life of the individual. Kinship ties are strong and national behavior is predominant. The various corporate bodies and individuals cooperate to achieve peace and harmony in the community. In such a society as this, Allardt associates a prevalence of team as compared with individual games.

This has led to the fourth proposition that: "the lower the division of labor and the stronger the social constraints, the more popular are team sports, and also the higher the division of labor and the weaker the constraints, the more popular are team sports."

The seventy-five games collected during the study were analysed on the basis of the interaction of the two independent variables and the results are shown below (see Table 7).

TABLE 7

GAMES AND INTERACTION OF DIVISION OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL GAMES

Game Characteristic	CULTURAL GROUPS			
	Benin	Ishan	Owan	Urhobo
Team	12 (67%)	12 (70%)	12 (60%)	16 (80%)
Individual	6 (33%)	5 (29%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)

A series of tests of significance of the differences between the percentages was carried out to determine whether these two groups of games were different (see Table 8).

TABLE 8

COMPARISON OF TEAM GAMES AND INDIVIDUAL GAMES

CULTURE GROUPS	CLASS OF GAMES		CRITICAL RATIO
	Team	Individual	
Benin	67%	33%	1.4
Ishan	70%	29%	1.57
Owan	60%	40%	.89
Urhobo	80%	20%	2.31*

*Significant at .10 level.

The results of the analysis partially support Allardt's proposition that societies with a low division of labor and with strong social constraints are associated with more team than individual games. (For purposes of the study group games were included with team games - see definition of terms - and were more numerous than team games per se.)

This proposition sets out a proposed relationship among variables. Allardt contended that

> . . . solidarity and cohesiveness in societies of low division of labor is obtained when social constraints are strong . . . (1970:28).

He further assumed that solidarity and cohesiveness in a society generate a popularity of team sports. By contemporary standards

this proposition appears to suffer from a lack of face validity. Team games almost invariably require a division of labor that is reasonably high and is often extensive. Indeed, a high degree of task differentiation requires a high level of solidarity and cohesiveness in order to create a final product.

Among the four groups studied very few "true" team games were found (see Definition of Terms) but a large number of group games were described. For the most part in these games there was no collective achievement as a result of a summation of effort on the part of group members but the group was needed in order to play the game. If there is justification for lumping the group games with team games, then the results tend to support the proposition set out by Allardt that a society that is characterized by a low division of labor and strong social constraints will typically have a greater number of team games than individual games. In this study fifty-two team games were identified as compared to twenty-three individual games. Presumably Allardt generated this proposition because he believed that in a society that has a system of ". . . ascriptive solidarities based on kinship and geographical proximity" (Allardt, 1970:16), social integration and pattern maintenance are often developed through group interaction. This concept is summarized as follows:

> The more similar the individuals are, the greater the possibility of comparisons. Consequently, the more similar the individuals, the more attractive the situations, and accordingly, when cohesion is defined through attraction, the more similarity, the more cohesion in a social group (Allardt, 19 :170).

This might well occur through cooperative labor practices or through team games where the rules of play and the uniformity of the roles encourage the members of the collectivity to behave in a uniform way. The rules of any game may be conceived of as social norms which socialized players have internalized or integrated as subsets of their own attitudes. As practice in conforming to such rules continues, players develop the ability to conform unthinkingly, i.e., reactive conformity replaces active conformity. Thus the findings of this study are consonnant with the concept that uniformity and solidarity emerge out of situations where there is a high possibility of comparison with others.

If, however, group games (i.e., where there is no collective gain) cannot be subsumed under the generic term "team games" as sketched in by Allardt, then the findings in this study do not support the Allardt hypothesis. Only a few "team games" were identified among the traditional children's games of the four Edo-speaking groups. By the word "team" is implied a collective gain based upon a group cooperative effort against an opponent.

The justification for lumping the two types of games resides in the fact that Allardt, in discussing group solidarity and social constraints, focused upon the mechanisms that created a strong pressure toward uniformity. Where these occurred he believed there was less likelihood of finding legitimacy conflict (Allardt, 19 :171-172).

Summary. In applying the typology and the propositions propounded by Allardt to the games gleaned from field research among four Edo-speaking groups of Nigeria many problems occured. Initially, there was the difficulty in operationally defining the four independent variables isolated by Allardt (i.e., division of labor, social constraints, political constraints, and severity of child obedience training). For purposes of this study these were dealt with in a largely subjective fashion and an attempt was made to identify the position that the four study groups seemed best to fit along a continuum bounded by two extreme or polar positions. This technique was inadequate for objective comparative purposes. Allardt himself suggested that the validity of the indicators might best be developed and tested ". . . using some advanced forms of multivariate analysis" such as transformation analysis (Allardt, 1970:23). Future research which uses, as a base point, this typology should include an extensive review of the characteristics which are frequently used to theoretically define the four independent variables. These could then possibly be submitted to transformation analysis so that the factor structures of one group under study could be compared to the factor structures of another.

The propositions generated by the typology vary in both face and content validity. The first proposition that "the higher the division of labor, the more formalized the rules of the activities" has face validity in that societies which have a high division of labor must have formalized and well-recognized mechanisms for ensuring

that the differentiated units function in a complementary manner. Since games are symptomatic in the sense that they are conceived of as reflecting some of the key social characteristics of a group it would superficially appear that complex societies with high divisions of labor would have a large number of games with highly formalized and rule-bound control mechanisms. Some theoretical justification of this concept can be found in the writings of such scholars as Tonnies, Durkheim, Sorokin, Parsons, and others. Further research based upon this proposition might well prove fruitful if a better means of operationally defining high and low division of labor can be formulated.

The second of Allardt's propositions (that the stronger the social and political constraints, the more important is physical strength and the less important technical skills) fails at first blush. The difficulties of linking these two concepts together are very great and the interaction of the two cannot be easily dealt with in application. Indeed, the findings of this study would give credence to the idea that the games which involved technical skills are of considerable importance (based on their relative occurrence in comparison with games of physical strength) in societies with relatively strong social and political constraints. Further research is required into psychoanalytic theory versus learning theory before this proposition can be adequately handled. The very least that must be done is to examine social constraint as an entity separate from political constraint. To some extent

Allardt's second proposition runs contrary to the findings of Sutton-Smith, Roberts, and Kozelka (1963:16), who noted that games of physical skill are associated cross-culturally with societies that stress high achievement. This form of social stress is not always found in societies with strong social and political constraints.

The third proposition (that the more severe the obedience training, the more aggressive the game activities) also fails from the standpoint of face and content validity. This is shown in the research findings of Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962:166-185; 1966:131-144). It was their contention that child training induces conflict which leads to involvement in expressive models, such as games and that, among other relationships, severe child training was related to games of strategy and not to aggressive games. The findings of this study failed to support Allardt's proposition and more nearly parallels the findings of Sipes (1973) who noted that aggressive combative sports do not act as alternate channels for dissipating tension, frustration, or hostility that might be generated through severe child rearing practices. Instead, aggressive or combative sports ". . . appear to be components of a broader culture pattern" (Sipes, 1973:80). The whole dimension of aggressive games needs to be re-examined following the pattern set out by Sipes and others.

The final proposition (that the lower the division of labor and the stronger the social constraints, the more popular are team sports, and also the higher the division of labor and the

weaker the social constraints, the more popular are team sports) appears, within the confines of this tudy and on the basis of the face and content validity examined earlier to be an area for further analysis. It will be necessary to re-trace the theory as set out by Allardt in order to generate a more objective method of operationalizing the two variables.

It is interesting to note that not a single game of chance was described by the children or the village elders during the six month period of the field research, nor was there found many forms of inter-village competitions save for the challenges to wrestling matches between males of neighboring villages. Among the children of the four Edo-speaking groups there was a predilection for group games rather than for tests of skill or endurance between two opponents.

CHAPER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of this study were first, to collect, describe and analyse the organizational patterns of the traditional games of children among four groups of Edo-speaking people in Mid-Western Nigeria, namely Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo; and secondly, to determine the extent to which Allardt's hypotheses could be supported in an investigation of the games of the said people.

The ethnographic survey of the Benin Kingdom by Bradbury (1957) and the booklet on the games and sports of Benin by Egharevba (1951) were reviewed prior to the field work experience to collect data about these people and their children's games. It was found that the traditional children's games were fast disappearing in the cities but were still played in the villages. The researcher's experience of some parts of the area and his knowledge of some of the dialects were used in an attempt to find solutions to some of the many problems encountered. Personal observation, photography, interviews, questionnaires and role-playing were the main methods used. There was a minimal use of interpreters, and most of the key informants and helpers were drawn mainly from among students in the Teachers' Colleges, and from a few other members who hold special positions in the community.

In the study of the people, it was found that historically, they all migrated from Benin. Therefore, it is not surprising to find linguistic affinities and other common cultural features. But these people also exhibit many differences, such as in their political organization. The compact village settlement,-the stratification of the male population into age grades, and patrilineal kinship and lineage organization with its emphasis on the primogeniture, are common characteristics of the people.

It was found that while in Benin and Ishan, hereditary rule with its attendant institutions predominate, political authority was vested on the age grades and title-associations in Owan and Urhobo. In all four groups, there was evidence of strong pressure towards social cohesion through the many sanctions that attend the well-established and well-known codes of morals and laws, conventions and rituals which were based on the people's religious and ethical beliefs. There was no difference in the social structure except that the variety of taboos and rituals had different meanings to different groups.

The unity of the village is demonstrated first, through the services rendered by the age grades in the form of communal protection and institutional functionaries; building of houses, markets, etc., and secondly by the specialized crafts and services of the people. In each household or family, there is a series of hierarchies which determine the moral rights and obligations of the members towards each other. These groups can be likened to Tonnies Gemeinschaft where the

aggregate of human beings remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors (Tonnies, 1940:74).

It is largely in the family that cultural continuity, the handing on of the social heritage, is accomplished.

Although there are varying traditional rites and ceremonies during the birth, naming and circumcision or clitoridectomy of the child, his relationship to other members in the family is the same in all the four groups. Within the first six months, the child is treated with much indulgence, but this is later replaced with severe obedience training. In polygamous families which are prevalent, there are stronger ties between full siblings than between those who have different mothers. Hence, there is open rivalry stated in custom, between brothers and sisters. In addition, the extension of ties to wider kinship groups where the father's or mother's sister is a "mother" can be seen first as a form of constraint, with the child having to please everyone. At the same time, the child can derive some protection at all times from one, if the other is hostile. This situation is like the one GLuckman described as "the peace of the feud" (Gluckman, 1970:57).

In relating the game structure to child-obedience training, it was found contrary to what Allardt predicted, that about 72% of the games were non-aggressive. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this study, another possible reason for this result can be associated with how Allardt defined "aggressive sport" as those involving bodily attack. An act of aggression in one culture may have different meaning

in another. In the further analysis of the games, it was also found that about 80% had non-formalized rules. In the traditional communities where the majority of the people are farmers, the age group often work together. The average person can provide most of his basic needs. The specialized roles of the individuals are not numerous. It was Allardt's contention that the converse is true, that is, a community with high division of labor will have games with formalized rules. As the communities in the four groups progress towards more diversified occupations and roles, the children have begun to engage in games such as soccer, cricket, hockey, volleyball, etc., which have formalized rules.

The pressure towards social cohesion through sanctions has been mentioned above. The study of the games also revealed that about 60% require more physical strength than technique. This was in keeping with Allardt's proposition that physical activities requiring physical strength were more important than those with technique to societies with strong social constraints. As a point of departure, it is interesting to note from Table 3 that while the other three groups had about 50% games of physical strength, Ishan has about 76%. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this study, Ishan people are noted for their acrobatic displays and their gymnastic prowess within the State.

The pattern of communal living that pervades all four groups is reflected in the maximum participation in the children's games. There are no umpires needed in most cases as a result of mutual trust

and interest. Games with boastful songs that incited others to fights are in a way unifying forces that help to solidify internal relationships. They also promote understanding and social intercourse with neighbors. There were more group than team games. In these group games, apart from the person designated "It" or the leader, all other players perform a similar role. In the study, it was found that about 70% of the games were played in groups as opposed to individual participation. Victory was of minor importance and there were no forms of reward. On the whole, the games are simple and easy to organize in simple societies such as those in Benin, Ishan, Owan and Urhobo.

Recommendations. Historically, many of the top athletes in Nigeria are of Mid-Western origin. At the First National Sports Festival held in January, 1973, the following was the result of the gold medal aggragate: the Mid-West State, with a population of about three million, won sixty-eight gold medals in contrast to a total of seventy-two won by all the other ten States with a total population of over sixty million. Lagos, the capital city of Nigeria, which is highly cosmopolitan and a part of Lagos State, came second with fifty-two gold medals. These results are strikingly different and demand some enquiries.

1. It is, therefore, recommended that similar studies should be carried out among other Nigerian cultural groups for comparative analyses which would help towards a fuller understanding of the socio-cultural background of Nigerian athletes. The National Institute of Sport Training and Research could be used for such studies.

2. Similar studies should be carried out in order to preserve the fast dying traditional games for use in schools, colleges, universities and recreation centres.

3. Although photographs show various aspects of the games, motion pictures could be used to supplement still pictures in future studies.

4. It is recommended that the preservation of indigenous Nigerian games could form a basis for the future inclusion of such games in the All-Africa Games.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Cultural Map of Mid-Western Nigeria

Mid-Western Nigeria Surveys, Benin City, 1969.

APPENDIX B

Traditional Games of Asaba

ASABA

Although the people of Asaba are historically from Benin, they have been greatly influenced by their neighbors (Ibos) across the river Niger; the games which the children play are no exception.

1. OSIA. The game of Osia is popular among boys and girls between the ages of five and twelve. The implement used is a hard rounded nut "Osia." There are two groups, each under its own leader. Players stand a little far away from the leaders who take turns in throwing the implement. Before the throwing is done, the leader would call "Osia O" three times, to which the players respond "O, oh!" When the "Osia" is thrown, all the players rush at it, and anyone who succeeds in catching it wins a point for his or her team. The first team to win twelve points is the winner. Every point won in this game has some significance. Traditionally, the points are interpreted thus:

First point - Picking a boxful of money.
Second point - Getting married.
Third point - Making mud for building.
Fourth point - Adding more water to make the mud soft for building.
Fifth point - Making the first layer of the building.
Sixth point - Making the second layer.
Seventh point- Making the third layer.
Eighth point - Making the fourth layer.
Ninth point - Buying things for the roofing.

Tenth point - Roofing the house.

Eleventh point - Putting a finishing touch to the roofing.

Twelveth point - Packing into the house to live in it.

In one other version of this game, there is a well marked out zone that a player, in possession of the implement, can run into before others stop chasing him. A member of a team is allowed to pass the "Osia" to another member of his team to avoid being caught. In this version, the "Osia" has to be returned to the thrower (the leader) to score a point.

In the two versions, leaders continue to throw the "Osia" for as long as the team scores points. The service changes when a member of the other team catches the "Osia."

The leader announces the score for a team before he makes a throw.

2. OKELEKE OKELEKE. This is a game played by boys and girls between the ages of eight and twelve. The only instrument used is a short stick about five to six inches long held by each of the children. There are about three versions of this game in Asaba Division. One of the versions is very much like those in other parts of the State.

In one version, the children are in three groups of six. The most common one is described below.

The children form a circle each holding a stick. They all sit or kneel as the leader decides. The leader sings "Okeleke Okeleke," and others respond "Din, Din, Kpom Kpom." This is repeated several

times as the children gently knock the sticks on the ground to the rhythm of the song. When the leaders says "Kwenu Oganaga," they all respond, "Oganaga Yo - o" and at the same time pass the stick to the person on the right. The passing of the stick is done continuously to the rhythm of the song. The entire song goes thus:

Okeleke Okeleke ..... Dim dim Kpom kpom

Okeleke Okeleke ..... Dim dim Kpom kpom

Inyero Moo so akara ka unata

Inyero Moo so akara ka unata

Obi sami Mara nma na eje oga

Obi sami Mara nma na eje oga

Inyero Moo so akara ka unata

Inyero Moo so akara ka unata

Obi Sami Mara nma na eje Oga

Obi Sami Mara nma na eje Oga.

Another version of the song goes like this:

Okeleke Okeleke ..... Dim dim Kpoi kpoi

Okeleke Okeleke ..... Dim dim Kpoi kpoi

Oganaga ..... Oganaga iyem

Onyenamo ..... Akara kinata

Onyenamo ..... Akara kinata

Onyenamo ..... Akara kinata

Obi ka obi ..... Manuma na ani anyi.

During the continuous passing of the stick, no player is allowed to be in possession of two sticks at a time. Such a defaulter

is not allowed to continue with the game. In some other parts of Asaba, such players are asked to kneel at the centre of the circle.

In another version of this game, there comes a time, while the sticks are continuously passing from hand to hand, that the leader decides to collect the sticks. The leader can re-start the game by distributing the sticks to the players.

The whole game is based on a story of two men said to have lived hundreds of years ago.

Their names are given as "Okeleke" and "Obi Sami." "Okeleke" was a greedy, self-centred man who would never compromise on any issue. He, "Okeleke," has a dispute with someone and paid his life for it. "Obi Sami," on the other hand, was a generous and energetic farmer. He had cultivated enough yams, had good harvest, and made sacrifices to the gods of soil "Ikenga." "Obi Sami's" yams were burnt by a hardened criminal, but his kinsmen contributed twice the number of yams for him. Thus, the lesson of sharing is taught in the passing of sticks.

In some parts of Asaba, children above the age of twelve years are not allowed to play the game. No one is allowed to play the game after midnight.

3. ONYE ENE NA ANYA NA AZU. This game is the same as Arhiu Ukpon Bhi Ikeke game in Ishan.

While the two players run around the circle, other members sing.

Onye ene na anya na azu
Mma nwu anyi ge tibue te o.

Meaning: "Whoever looks behind will be beaten up by masquerade."
This song is repeated several times.

4. IKPU OGBE (a community). This form of "Hide and Seek," the stay-where-you-are-until found, is popular among boys and girls. Aś soon as children assemble for the game, a leader is appointed and someone volunteers to be a seeker. The leader sits on a spot and uses a piece of cloth to blindfold the seeker. As other players go to hide, there is a dialogue between the leader and the seeker:

Leader - kpuea Ofu ("Bring one person.")

Seeker - Ololoh ("It's all right.")

Leader - kpuea Abua ("Bring two.")

Seeker - Ololoh ("It's fine.")

Leader - Inweta n'gbada ibutalim o ("Bring a bird.")

Seeker - Ololoh ("It's fine.")

Leader - Inweta agwo ilia O ("You may bring nothing.")

Seeker - Mna o ("No.")

The seeker is left to look for those in hiding. If the seeker touches any hider by the ankle then that person becomes the seeker in the next round. If he fails, another person is chosen to seek others in the next round.

After some time, the leader calls on all those in hiding to come out. They in turn make sure with the leader that they would be safe if they answer the call. The game is repeated as often as the children wish.

5. IKPU OGBE (Another Version). The leader, who is usually

the most senior, assembles the children and explains the areas to be used for hiding. This is necessary so that those in hiding could hear the leader. The leader then chooses one of the children as a seeker, closes his eyes with his hands and asks others to go to hide. As he closes the eyes of the seeker, the leader says:

Kpu Ofu - Ololoh

Kpu Abua - Ololoh

Kpu Ato - Ololoh

Ifu Odudu Iwe Lei

Mana Ifu Nwagvor mma nma Iwetelumn.

Meaning: "Call one - ololoh

call two - ololoh

call three- ololoh.

When you see a fly you catch and eat.

But when you see a beautiful girl, you send her to me."

The leader releases the seeker and allows him or her to look for those in hiding. After a little while, the leader calls "Ogbe nmoh" ("For the evil spirits!") and no hider will answer. He then calls "Ogbe nmadu" ("For human beings!") and the hiders would answer and try to come out. Anyone caught by the seeker sits with the leader until all others are back home and becomes a seeker in the next round.

6. MBIBO. In Owan, this game is called Jedo Jedo and is played by two children. But in Asaba, more than two can play. A stick about six inches to one foot, and a mound of sand is needed for the game. Boys and girls between the ages of five and eight have more

fun in the game than the older ones.

First, the two players make a mound of sand in a conical shape and plant the stick at the apex of the cone-shaped mound. While preparing the mound, one of the players sings "Kponkpo" to which the partner responds "Mbibo."

The game begins with each player digging out the sand on his side with the fingers so that the stick planted at the centre falls down. The stick must not be touched.

The following song accompany the digging activity:

Mbibo Mbibo

Kiloto Ndegene

Onye Koma

Onye ayan mbibo liogo.

The song is about the joy of playing this interesting game. The lazy digger has no chance of winning.

It is a point for any digger to whose side the stick falls. But if the stick falls to the neutral side, it is no point for any of the diggers. Players agree on the number of points to win a game before they start.

7. UMUATULU. In this Hide and Seek game, boys and girls play different roles. The girls play the role of the "sheep" (Umuatulu) meaning children of the "sheep," and the boys play the role of the "lions."

The "sheep" go to hide in one spot and the "lions" call on them to come out. First, the "sheep" all answer together that they

would not come out or come home for fear of the "lions." The "lions" then assure the "sheep" that it was all safe for them to be out of hiding. As the "sheep" run out, the "lions" try to catch them.

The children form a big circle and while they sing the following song, the leader calls on individual players (girls only) to dance at the centre of the circle. The song as translated is:

"Who will dance Nda!
Who will dance Nda!
Are you ashamed Nda!
Is your husband here Nda!
You are ashamed, you are ashamed
You are ashamed O Nda."

8. IZI JI. The game Izi ji offers an opportunity for children to learn the names of the variety of species of yams, a most important food product in the locality. The game is played only by boys probably because cultivating yams is a man's work in the farm.

About ten to twenty boys between the ages of six and nine elect a leader (most often the oldest in the group). All the players except one sit away out of earshot of the leader. The leader whispers the name of a yam to the player who is with him. Some of the names of the yams are "Jiocha," "Jioku," "Jiasukwu," "Jiomi," "Jierefu," etc. This player goes to the other players to ask them individually to guess the name of the yam mentioned by the leader.

Any player who guesses right goes to sit with the leader. The penalty of the last player is that all other players

would sing a humiliating song about him. But while the song is on, the player so involved would chase all the players and if he succeeded in catching anyone, the humiliating song is then directed to the boy caught and so on. The leader puts a stop to the game.

9. UMU AZU. This is another game more popular with the boys. Boys form two groups, "Umu-Azu" (small fishes) and "Umu-Ajii" (small crocodiles). The "fishes" are always more in number. For example, if the "Umu-Azu are about twenty in number, then the "Umu-Ajii" will be about six or seven. The "Umu-Azu" have two homes at each end of the playground. They congregate in one of the homes and would like to cross over to the other home at the other end of the playground. But the "Umu-Ajii" are mid-way, ready to catch them. On their way to the second home, some of the small "fishes" are caught by the "crocodiles." This exercise is repeated until nearly all the small "fishes" are caught.

It should be noted that the "fishes" are allowed only about two minutes rest in any one home before moving to the second home. This helps the small "crocodiles" to speed up their work of catching.

10. EKPU KPU KPU LEKE. A tunnel game popular among girls between the ages of nine and twelve all over the State is Ekpu. The girls form two lines facing each other. Hands are raised to clap partners hands and all sing:

Ekpu kpu kpu leke
Kpu leke no - o - o
Kpu leke.

Meaning: "An antelope has passed."

Each pair from one end, still clapping, pass through the tunnel made by the other players and go to join the line at the other end. This is done continuously until every pair has had a turn.

The game can be repeated.

11. IGBA UTA. A form of archery similar to Eko in Owan. The implements of bows, arrows and a fruit used are the same. It is an exclusive game for boys.

In this version at Asaba, the fruit is thrown forward, and all the boys participating (usually four to five boys, aim at it. If all but one misses the target, those who missed surrender one arrow each to the champion. But if two or more hit the target in one throw, no one is fined an arrow. The game continues until the players decide to stop.

12. NWA AWOLO MEE. The "lion and the goat" game is popular all over the State. See Ekpenkha mue Ewe in Benin. The only significant difference in this version is that the players in the circle who were responsible for the "lion's" entry into the circle are eliminated from the game. The game continues with the appointment of two new players to play the roles of the "lion" and the "goat."

13. AKPAKOLO. Boys and girls join hands and form a big circle. As the circle moves round, a leader leads in the following song.

Leader - Akpakolo

Players - Kpakolo

Leader - Akpakolo

Players - Kpakolo

Leader - Udumo

Players - So gene

Leader - Onye Osolu

Players - Ya ya ya so ya.

In the last response by the players, they all stoop at the last word. The last player to stoop goes into the centre of the circle and helps in the singing. The leader helps in identifying those who stoop late. When many players are in the centre the game stops.

14. IGHO ISE. This game is very similar to the Ukpisavbiogho game in Owan. The differences are:

1. To take the one and the six marbles, you don't have to place the one seed on top of the other six.

2. To finish the game, the six seeds are held while the seventh seed is thrown up, and the player makes a stroke on the ground with the index finger before catching the seed thrown up.

3. Play is resumed at the step where failure occurred.

15. ITA AFA OR MULIMULI. A guessing game for boys and girls between the ages of seven and ten is Ita Afa. Children are in two groups each under a leader. The leader of each group gives special names to members of his group without the knowledge of members and the leader of the other group.

The two groups sit in a row some twenty yards apart facing each other. Each child sits with legs outstretched.

The leader of one group walks to the other group and uses

his hands to close the eyes of a member of the group. He, the leader, then calls one member of his group by the special name, to touch the person who is blindfolded. This the child does and runs back. This leader makes sure that his child is properly seated before he opens the eyes of the opponent. This same leader immediately instructs his group either to all laugh or to look serious. This is done to make it difficult for the child blindfolded to identify the child who touched him or her. If the guess is right, the child who did the touching goes to the guesser's home. If the guess is wrong, then the guesser is lost to the other group.

The leaders alternate and the game continues. The group with the greater number of players is the winner.

16. NYA NYA NYA UGBO. This playform is a reflection on the daily life of the people who live by the waterside in Okpanam town by the river Niger.

The children sit in a row, each with a stick to represent paddles for boats. They all paddle to the rhythm of a song. There is also uniformity in the movement of the paddles from one side to the other. The leader's duty is to eliminate those who do not keep to the rhythm.

The song is:

Nya Nya Nya Ugbo ("Paddle, paddle the canoe,")
kanyi welu felu ("so that we can cross.")
Nyagide, Nyagide, Myagide ("Paddle, paddle, etc.")
kanyi welu felu ("so that we can cross.")

17. KPUM KPUM KPOGENE. This game is similar to Ekpu Kpu Kpu Leke already described above (see number ten). But in this one, each pair of girls is given a name of an animal, e.g., the first is "Edi," the second "Efi," and the last "Ezi." The leader leads with the song "Kpum kpum Kpogene" and the others respond "Ogene Ogene Ogene." The leader then begins to name each pair that passes through the tunnel.

18. MPULU MPULU. An acting game in the form of do-as-I-say is Mpulu which is popular among boys and girls.

Children kneel close to each other in a circle. The palm of the hand indicates white, while the back is black. The leader leads in a song at the end of which every player, according to the demand of the song, shows his palm or back of his hand. The player who shows the wrong side is eliminated and asked to kneel outside the circle. The game is repeated and those who remain longest in the circle are winners.

The song:

Leader - Mpulu Mpulu

Others - Mpulu Mpulu

Leader - Ogadi ocha, ogadi oji ocha ko kama ko di ocha.

Meaning: "Will it be black or white?

Black is better, it is black."

19. IFE GWU ANYI EGABA GO. This is a guessing game for girls. They stand close in a circle with the two hands at the back. One girl who is the guesser remains at the centre of the circle. An

object is passed from one member to the other behind the back while they sing a song asking the guesser to make a guess who of them is in possession of the object. The guesser makes an attempt and gives a name of a player. The player opens her hands for all to see. If the guess is right, the girl who has the object becomes the new guesser. If the guess is wrong, a second trial is made before a new guesser is chosen. The game continues.

20. SUWE. The game of Suwe is the most popular game for girls in the State from the data collected during the research. It is an exclusive game for girls.

The court is easily drawn on the ground by a group of girls who want to play (see Figure 29). They usually ballot for order of play.

A girl takes a pebble or small stone and throws it to Box one in a diagram. Then she jumps over Box one and lands on Boxes two and three with each foot on two and three. She steps into Box four with a single foot. This foot must be used each time there is single stepping. She jumps with both feet into Boxes five and six, and a single step into Box seven. From here she steps into the "palace." She turns round about in the "palace" and repeats the same process back to Boxes two and three. Here she bends to pick up the pebble or stone in Box one. She now jumps outside the court with her back to the whole court. She throws the stone or pebble over her head or shoulder backwards. If it lands on any of the Boxes, she writes her name or make a cross "x" in the Box. This means that she has built

a "house." If the stone falls outside the court, no "house" is built. Others take their turn.

Rules. 1. No player is allowed to bend to throw the stone or pebble at the start of the game.

2. No player is allowed to step into another player's "house."

3. Double and single steppings should be done wherever required.

4. A player who falls while stepping, looses her turn.

The player with a greater number of "houses" is the winner.

APPENDIX C

Game Distribution Charts

GAME DISTRIBUTION CHART A

BENIN

GAMES OR PLAYFORMS	Sex	For.	N-For.	Phys. St.	Tec.	Agg.	N-Agg.	Tm./Gr.	Ind.	Gues.
1. OLATORO	m/f		x	x			x	x		
2. OGBETUTU LENOGIE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
3. EKPENGHA MUEN EWE	m/f		x	x		x		x		
4. AKHUE	m	x			x		x	x		
5. IKOTO	m		x		x	x			x	
6. ULOKO TUE EBE	m/f		x		x		x	x		
7. VBUA GHI HORE	f		x		x		x	x		
8. OKEREKE OKEREKE	m/f		x		x		x	x		
9. ERHEN BA VBUHUMWOKE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
10. ISE	m/f		x		x		x		x	x
11. AGHADAGHADA	m/f	x			x		x		x	x
12. OKHOKHO NA GBEVA	m/f		x		x		x		x	
13. KOKOYE OYE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
14. ULELE	m		x	x			x	x		
15. OGBO	m/f		x	x		x			x	
16. IVBOMI	m		x	x			x		x	
17. OFEN OYEKUYE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
18. OGIUROISE	m	x			x		x	x		
		3	15	9	9	3	15	12	6	2

Key:
- For. - Formalized Games
- N-For. - Non-Formalized Games
- Phys. St. - Games of Physical Strength
- Tec. - - Games of Technical Skill
- Agg. - Aggressive Skill Games
- Non-Agg. - Non-Aggressive Games
- Tm./Gr. - Team and Group Games
- Ind. - Individual Games
- Gues. - Guessing Games.

GAME DISTRIBUTION CHART B

ISHAN

GAMES OR PLAYFORMS	Sex	For.	N-For.	Phys. St.	Tec.	Agg.	N-Agg.	Tm./Gr.	Ind.	Gues.
1. UPE - E - E	f		x	x			x	x		
2. OGBE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
3. AYAN NIHIEN	m/f		x	x			x	x		x
4. UKOKI ZAGHELEN	f		x	x			x	x		
5. OBHORUGBOMEN	m/f		x	x			x	x		
6. ERAN TOVBATO RUNE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
7. KALA	m/f	x			x		x		x	
8. ARE UVI FI	m/f		x	x			x	x		
9. UGBOLO GBE EVA	m/f		x		x		x	x		
10. ARHIU UKPON BHI IKEKE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
11. OLAGEDE OLAGEDE	m/f		x	x		x			x	
12. AKPAKPA KPAE RE	f		x		x		x		x	
13. EKIORUMI YE DOMI	f		x	x			x		x	
14. IMUOMON RE DE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
15. EKPEN KHA MUE EWE	m/f		x	x		x		x		
16. AKHUE	m	x			x		x		x	
17. OJEMELE	m/f		x	x			x	x		
		2	15	13	4	2	15	12	5	1

GAME DISTRIBUTION CHART C

OWAN

GAMES OR PLAYFORMS	Sex	For.	N-For.	Phys. St.	Tec.	Agg.	N-Agg.	Tm./Gr.	Ind.	Gues.
1. UKPISAVBIOGHO	m/f	x			x		x		x	
2. UREGHE	m/f	x			x		x		x	
3. IMIYEN	f		x	x			x	x		
4. ESEO YE	f		x	x			x	x		
5. UKPEMIYENGBEN	f		x	x			x	x		
6. OVBIEKINRIN TOLOGHERE RE	f		x	x			x	x		
7. OGOLEMERE GOLOKO	m/f		x	x		x		x		
8. GOGO IYO E	f		x	x		x		x		
9. OBEGURE LOFI HUE	f		x	x		x		x		
10. SILAGBADAGBA	m/f		x	x		x			x	
11. AGBE	m		x		x		x		x	
12. JEDO JEDO	m		x		x	x			x	
13. EKO	m	x			x		x		x	
14. UKPEDOVBIOJEIKA	m		x		x		x	x		
15. UKPOGITOHGO	m/f		x	x		x			x	
16. OTURKAR	m/f		x	x			x	x		
17. IWEOJE	f		x	x			x	x		
18. OLEMINI OJEKURE	f		x	x			x		x	
19. OVBIOVBIMEN	m/f		x	x		x		x		
20. ISE	m	x			x		x	x		
		4	16	13	7	7	13	12	8	0

GAME DISTRIBUTION CHART D

URHOBO

GAMES OR PLAYFORMS	Sex	For.	N-For.	Phys. St.	Tec.	Agg.	N-Agg.	Tm./Gr.	Ind.	Gues.
1. ISSE	m/f		x		x		x	x		
2. ASEDJEVWO	m/f		x		x		x	x		
3. ODO RERE ODO	m/f		x	x			x	x		
4. OKO	m		x	x		x		x		
5. ATEGUA	m/f		x		x		x	x		
6. EMENI RE METE	f		x	x			x	x		
7. OMANU RA YO GU	m/f		x	x		x		x		
8. IBI HE - E	f		x	x			x	x		
9. IBIEFRE	f		x		x		x	x		
10. EJE EGBO	m/f		x	x			x	x		
11. UBI KIA	m/f		x	x			x	x		
12. FEKO FEKO	m/f		x	x			x	x		
13. EKO	m/f		x		x		x		x	
14. OTOLERARA	m		x	x		x		x		
15. ABOKI	m/f	x			x		x		x	x
16. AKHUE	m	x			x		x	x		
17. FIEGE	m		x	x		x		x		
18. EDA	m		x		x	x			x	
19. UDODO	m		x		x		x		x	
20. UKEGBO	m/f		x	x		x		x		
		2	18	11	9	6	14	16	4	1

GAME DISTRIBUTION CHART E

ASABA

GAMES OR PLAYFORMS	Sex	For.	N-For.	Phys. St.	Tec.	Agg.	N-Agg.	Tm./Gr.	Ind.	Gues.
1. OSIA	m/f		x	x			x	x		
2. OKELEKE OKELEKE	m/f		x		x		x	x		
3. ONYE ENE NA ANYAN AZU	m/f		x	x		x		x		
4. IKPU OGBE (1)	m/f		x	x			x	x		
5. IKPU OGBE (2)	m/f		x	x			x	x		
6. MBIBO	m/f		x		x		x		x	
7. UMUATULU	m/f		x	x			x	x		
8. IZI JI	m		x		x		x	x		x
9. UMU AZU	m		x	x		x		x		
10. EKPU KPU KPU LÈKE	f		x	x			x	x		
11. IGBA UTA	m	x			x		x		x	
12. NEA AWOLO MEE	m/f		x	x		x		x		
13. AKPAKOLO	m/f		x	x			x	x		
14. IGHO ISE	m/f	x			x		x		x	
15. ITA AFA OR MULIMULI	m/f		x		x	x		x		x
16. NYA NYA UGBO	m/f		x	x		x		x		
17. KPUM KPUM KPOGERE	f		x	x			x	x		
18. MPULU MPULU	m/f		x		x		x	x		x
19. IFE GWU ANYI EGABA	f		x		x		x	x		x
20. SUWE	f	x			x		x		x	
		3	17	11	9	5	15	16	4	4

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire

A RESEARCH STUDY OF THE TRADITIONAL GAMES OF MID-WESTERN NIGERIA

BY

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I TRADITIONAL GAMES (Questionnaire)

Note A. The characteristics of a Game are:

(a) It is a voluntary physical activity,

(b) Systematic, i.e., the patterns can be repeated,

(c) There is opposition. Even in solitary or one-person games, the player mentally pits one aspect of himself or herself against another,

(d) There are rules however simple they may be,

(e) There are predictable outcomes or a goal in mind,

(f) There is a winner or a group of winners.

B. These are Games children play on their own.

C. This study is limited to children of Primary School Age about 5 - 12 years, whether they attend school or not.

D. Do all you can to get the true facts to be recorded here.

It pays to ask questions about facts we are not sure of.

1. Name of the Village/Town _____

2. Name of the Division _____

3. Name of the Game (Local Name) _____

4. What sex (boy or girl) plays the game? _____

5. Age of children who play the game. _____

6. When is the game played? Day or night? _____

7. Where is the game played? _____

8. Why is the game played? (Is it connected with any celebration or merely voluntary?) _____

9. Describe fully how the game is played. Include diagrams where necessary. Remember to mention:

   (a) Sex and age of children.

   (b) Number of players or teams.

   (c) The materials used for the game if any.

   (d) How the game is played.

   (e) Rules of the game.

   (f) Duration of the game.

_____

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_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

II DIVISION OF LABOR (ADULTS)

This section concerns the parents of the children.

1. What is the main occupation of the majority of:

   (a) Men _____

   (b) Women _____

2. LIST all the various types of crafts practised in this Village or Town. DO NOT DESCRIBE.

MEN	WOMEN
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

THANK YOU.

YOUR NAME: MR./MRS./MISS _____

NAME OF SCHOOL/COLLEGE AND TOWN _____

_____

APPENDIX E

Correspondence

Joseph C. Omoruan
Department of Physical
Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2H9

April 5, 1974

Eric Allardt, Esq., Head,
Department of Sociology,
University of Helsinki
HELSINKI, Finland

Dear Sir:

I am a Graduate Student from Nigeria, West Africa, currently studying for a Ph.D. degree in Physical Education at the above named University.

My area of interest is on the games and pastimes of the people of the Mid-Western State of Nigeria. It is a State of about two and a half million people in a country of twelve States with about sixty million population. The Mid-Western State is unique in many respects. First is that unlike the other eleven States, it has no common "native" language except the "pigeon" English. There are about fourteen dialects and some groups of these dialects are easily understandable. Second, the Mid-Western State has produced about sixty percent of the National athletes over the years. I am a Mid-Westerner and on that Government's Scholarship.

My main reasons for the proposed study are:

1. To revive and document the indigenous games and pastimes before they are all lost.

2. To see how much of the culture of the people can be studied through the games. There might be other main and subsidiary findings.

The purpose of my writing you this letter is to inform you that having considered some other models for such a study, I would like to use the one in your article on "Basic Approaches in Comparative Sociological Research and the Study of Sport;" The Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sport and Games, edited by Gunther Luschen of the University of Illinois. I write to ask if since you wrote this article, whether your views have been modified, and if so, could I be obliged with your latest thinking on the subject. If I may quote from this article in question, you did say that "the typology of the theory contained in the table may be wrong .... it is certainly very primitive and formally unsatisfactory."

(contd.....)

It will be greatly appreciated if you can please send me your comments at your earliest convenience. My dissertation proposal and the candidacy examination are all due this summer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph C. Omoruan

JCO:elf

cc. Dr. R. G. Glassford
Chairman
Department of Physical Education
University of Alberta

January 16,1974

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
RESEARCH GROUP FOR COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGY
Mariankatu 10 A 13
SF - 00170 Helsinki 17
Finland

Mr. Joseph C. Omoruan
Dept. of Physical Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2H9
Canada

Dear Mr. Omoruan,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of April 5. I am of course happy that you have noticed my paper in Gunther Luschen's book. I am sorry to say that I have not worked in the field of the sociology of sport, and that I have not tried to expand the ideas in my paper any further. My field is general theory and political sociology, and I am enclosing a paper in which I try to specify some of the ideas behind the typology in the paper on sport and games. Some of the same ideas are specified in my paper "Types of Protest and Alienation", published in E. Allardt and S. Rokkan(eds.), Mass Politics, New York: The Free Press, 1970. Unfortunately I have no reprints but the book might be found in your university library.

Your research concerns and objectives are very interesting, and I would like to say something more substantial. However, since already some time has passed since the cross-cultural sport paper was written it is difficult to recall additional ideas I had in mind when writing the paper.

I am sure you have a good topic for your thesis.

With best regards

Yours sincerely

Erik Allardt
Erik Allardt
Research Professor

FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA T6G 2H9

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

July 19, 1974

The Nigerian High Commissioner
Nigeria High Commission
320 Queen's Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1R 5A3

Dear Sir:

RE: Mr. J. C. Omoruan - Government Postgraduate Scholar.
Application for a Special Research Grant.

The above named individual has been working with me for the past year as a Ph.D. Provisional Candidate. We will be going forward before an examining committee on August 22nd for the purpose of changing his category from a Provisional Candidate for a Ph.D. to a Candidate for a Ph.D. In the meantime, however, he has been preparing materials for a proposed research study which must be carried out in Nigeria. Notably this is the collection and analysis of the traditional games of the Edo people of Mid-Western Nigeria. Little is apparently being done in the brief time available to put on record the meaning of life to these people, if there is anything precious in the Edo culture, and we believe there is, it should be preserved in books and on films. Now that the Edo culture has begun to undergo significant changes as a result of the modernization of Nigeria, the native people themselves are abandoning their ancient traditions, and these are being offered to us briefly at this moment. Unless we assume the task of preserving these traditions for future generations, a great deal of our cultural heritage will be lost. Mr. Omoruan and I, as well as other members of his committee, have become concerned over the need for such a study, and the Department of Physical Education heartily endorses this particular project.

If I can be of any further assistance to you in assessing Mr. Omoruan's application for a Special Research Grant, please do not hesitate in contacting me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

R. G. Glassford
Chairman

RGG/sd

Joseph C. Omoruan
c/o Department of Physical
Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

September 3, 1974

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam:

Notice of Research Studies of Selected Ethnic Groups in Mid-West Nigeria

In two weeks from now I will be in Nigeria to do some studies of some aspects of the culture of the peoples of Mid-Western Nigeria.

I am on a Mid-West Post Graduate Scholarship working on a Ph.D. degree.

My main area of interest is to revive, document and analyze the indigenous games of the people before they are all lost. A second aspect is for me to investigate how much of the culture of the people can be studied through these games.

I need not write much of the global interest that the State Governor, the Government and the people have shown in sporting activities. The achievements have been great. The thesis of the investigator's project outlined above is that a good knowledge of the past will not only help the good understanding of the present but will also assist in better future plans for sports in the State.

I would appreciate it if I could make your College my base when I visit. I would need board and lodging for a week at one time. It is not possible for me to send now an itinerary as my movements depend on the progress I make. My studies will be spread from September 23 till January, 1975.

I would need some of the students as key informants and assistants without disrupting the College program. I will be quite willing to give some lectures on Physical Education and related subjects.

I have attached a copy of my vita for a fuller personal introduction.

I look forward to meeting and working with you, the staff and the students.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

J. C. Omoruan

c.c. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Benin City.

Joseph C. Omoruan
c/o Department of Physical
Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

September 3, 1974

The Permanent Secretary
Mid-West Ministry of Education
Benin City, Nigeria

Dear Sir:

Notice of Research Studies of Selected Ethnic Groups in Mid-Western Nigeria

This is to inform you that I will soon be in Nigeria for some ethnographic studies of some cultural groups in Mid-Western Nigeria.

I am on Mid-West Post Graduate Scholarship working on my Ph.D. degree.

My main area of interest is to revive and document the indigenous games of the people before they are all lost.

A second aspect is to see how much of the culture of the people can be studied through these games.

The interest that the Governor, the Government and the people have shown in sporting activities is unique. The achievement is equally phenomenal. If this sporting heritage is viewed as a continuum, then it becomes very essential because a good knowledge of the past will not only help us to understand the present but also plan for a better future. This has been my concern for this project which is not only first of its kind in Nigeria but in Africa.

I need your co-operation as I would be working with the people through the Schools, Colleges, Councils, etc.

It will be appreciated if this information is brought to the notice of all those who may be of assistance to me in my research.

I hope to make a personal call to see you before I resume my field work.

Attached is a copy of my Vita for purposes of introduction.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

J. C. Omoruan

c.c. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Information.
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.